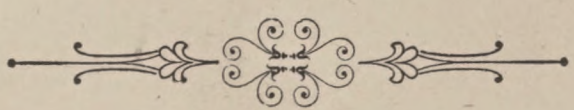
WILD ROCK

A Tale of Two Seasons

By WANDERER



"Autumn nodding o'er the yellow plain"

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WILD ROCK.

A TALE OF TWO SEASONS.

AUTUMN.

CHAPTER I.

"Te rum, a dum, dum,
Here's a boy with a drum,
And his cheeks are as bright as the roses;
The cap on his head
And his jacket are red,
And he comes from among the Red Noses."

THE DRUMMER BOY.

THE great boot and shoe house of Pegg, Awle & Leather—strictly wholesale—has many travelling salesmen, but I wear the medal for making the largest number of gilt-edge sales. My success, as I often tell Sallie and my six little girls, as we sit around the fire at home, is due to my faculty for telling stories. My friends admit that I am a marvellous story-teller. In my journeys I have seen some curious things, and my attractive manner of narrating these has gotten off many

a lot of questionable stock for Pegg, Awle & Leather.

Among my reminiscences none have proved so generally attractive as the history of some occurrences in the far South nearly twelve years ago. At the time, I was laying the foundation of our present colossal trade with that section, and was detained for a part of two seasons in a country called the Delta of the Yazoo. The features of this section are peculiar. Seemingly impenetrable swamps line either side of the Mississippi River, which here carries towards the sea the mingled waters of half a continent.

Within these swamps, hidden by the dense foliage, are deep lagoons and lakes dotted with cyprus knees. The air is filled with the perfume of the jessamine and the mocking-bird's song. And here and there the sun breaks through the forest to light a plantation yellow with nodding maize or white with long tresses of cotton.

One warm September day two men were riding on the levee which protects the plantations. The sun was setting behind the willows on the opposite shore, and threw across the yellow water of the river a bridge of light like burnished copper. Both horsemen were young, but their appearance was in marked contrast. The slight, agile frame, graceful bearing, and fine curvilinear face of the dark-eyed

rider, with the constant play of his features, now shadowed with a passing thought and now sparkling with laughter, seemingly could have little in common with the broad, earnest brow and calm blue eye of his companion, whose Atlas-like frame might bear a world of sorrow.

"Wiley," said the latter, as he reined up his horse and pointed to a row-boat near the other bank of the river, "yonder is a woman 'paddling her own canoe,' who ten years ago probably had a hundred servants at her command. Behold an illustration of your theory, now in practice, that the freedom of the negro shall give this valley its highest development."

"Upon that idea I fought," replied the other, "and I am not yet prepared to think I was wrong. But," he added, turning to his companion one of his sparkling glances, "had I known Colonel Magruder six years ago, my views and conduct might have been different."

"Call me not Colonel," said Magruder, sternly, "I buried that at Appomattox. I am a farmer now Eustace, with no title except that of my people's friend."

"And a greater one you could not select, Bob," answered Wiley Eustace, seriously. "But look!" pointing across the river, "your heroine of the hundred slaves has learned rapidly in boating.

See, she has hoisted a sail, and the batteau (for such it seems) skims the water like a swan. Who can it be?"

Robert Magruder shaded his eyes with his hand. "Look before the boat enters the glare," he said to Eustace, "or you will not distinguish her features."

A moment they stood motionless, like two fine equestrian statues, and then, as the little boat floated into the eye of the sun, they wheeled and galloped into the forest.

A causeway made of saplings laid crosswise and covered with earth led through the swamp from the Mississippi River to the hills which are found some score of miles beyond the Yazoo. Each side of this road luxuriant tangled undergrowth of vines and holly bushes and wild flowers hid the black muddy soil. Overhead were cottonwood trees, the white oaks and cypress, and occasionally a stately magnolia towered in its gorgeous beauty.

The horsemen followed this causeway only a short distance, when, turning into a road leading off on the crest of a slight ridge, they cantered under an arch of muscadine vines, and stopped before a gate. Wiley threw his bridle-rein over a hitching-rack as he leaped from the saddle and awaited the movements of his more sedate companion.

"Ah! here comes Laura," said the latter, as he dismounted. "Eustace, she will admit that, once, we are in time for tea."

On the gallery of a square two-story house, made of hewn logs, which stood in the centre of the yard, appeared now a lady. Her attendant was an old man, whose attenuated and bending form and vacant gaze indicated that the charms of this world were losing their hold upon him; and before these went bounding and barking, toward the gate, a fine specimen of the Newfoundland dog.

"Ah, Meister Eustace," said the old man, as, supported by his daughter's arm, he reached the gate, where the Newfoundland was frisking about the young men and greeting them in his dog fashion, "ye see Bracken is younger than I, and he jist gies ye a' the welcome. But wha ha' ye been, laddies?"

"To the Empire City, to get a big black crow," answered Robert, sententiously.

"Wha?" asked the old man, with a vacant stare.

"The wharf-boat, for the newspaper," said Eustace, smiling kindly.

By this time the old gentleman had drawn a book of ivory tablets from his pocket, and was hastily turning its leaves. "Ah, yes, lads," he cried, as Wiley spoke; "I ken, I ken. Frogg has names for his things as queer as himsel."

"Father's memory is nearly gone," said the lady in an undertone to Eustace, "and he notes on his tablets everything unusual."

"With his other faculties so strong he may dispense with this one," answered the young man. "If I understand, he forgets only recent events?"

"Yes," she said, sadly. "But—"

"Coom on! coom on! Eustace," cried the cheery old man, leading the way to the house with Robert, his son, "an' dinna be tellin' your tales there to Laurie."

Chatting and laughing, the little party moved to the house, and Bracken marched seriously behind them, not even wagging his tail, but obviously with a sentiment of calm approval.

CHAPTER II.

"Mine enemy's dog,
Though he had bit me, should have
Stood that night,
Against my fire." KING LEAR.

A PRETTY picture was Laura, half-timidly sitting behind the quaint old silver tea-service. Large liquid blue eyes reflecting every emotion, gave life to her pure Grecian features. Masses of golden hair fell over her shapely shoulders. And the willowy grace of her handsome form was hardly concealed by a light sacque which harmonized with the shell-like tints of her complexion.

"What a lovely sister!" cried Colonel Bob, laughing and kissing her, as he stood by her chair. "Eustace, we must have a water party."

"Content!" said Wiley, who had just been seated. "When?"

"On my birthday, of course, sir," said Laura with mock anger. "Shall I not have a *fête?*"

"You will be Cleopatra," laughed Wiley; "and we shall man your barge."

"A bonnier queen than little Annie Laurie ne'er lived," said old Magruder. "But I fear her followers will be too few for a princess."

"If not so numerous, they will be more devoted," replied Eustace, seriously looking at the blushing girl.

"Prithee, peace!" cried the young lady, in charming confusion, "or I will be tempted to desert—"

Loud barking from Bracken interrupted her, and a voice was heard at the gate angrily ordering back the dog. A pause in the conversation ensued, and all listened. Robert exclaimed: "Dan Bludger, as I live!" then raising his voice, he cried. "One moment, Captain, and I shall be with you."

Robert pushed back his chair, and leaving the table went to the gate. Old Magruder rose and awaited the visitor. A man presently stood under a swinging lantern, which shed through the hall the rather dim rays of a star candle. In this light the arrival was more impressive than prepossessing. A strong angular frame was surmounted by a countenance which, bloated with rage as it now appeared, conveyed the idea of a dangerous and formidable beast. He was "heavy set," as one would say, with large bones. A big head, matted with coarse reddish hair, was remarkable for the great breadth between the ears. Animal and destructive

tendencies were strongly marked in the eyes which shone under bushy red brows, in the thick, long, close-fitted lips, and in the massive, iron-like jaws, which closed with the power of a vise.

"Ah, Captain Bludger, coom in, mon," said the hospitable old Scotchman. "Glad I am to see ye, an' dinna ye mind Bracken. It's a gude dog, an' weel trained. I got him frae St. Johns. He's smarter than human, mon. He'll bark at ye, but his instinct is unerring, and he will never bite a gentleman. This is his nature. Ye need na' fear, Captain. He will na' bite a gentleman."

"By St. George!" cried Bludger, "the brute has bitten me, sir; and I am more a gentleman than any beggarly McGregor in Scotland."

Robert, apparently not heeding this remark, looked sufficiently at the Captain's wounded trousers to see that Bracken's teeth had drawn no blood, and said quietly:

"We are at tea. Walk in. Laura will be gratified to hear your news."

"Yes," said Eustace, rising, as Bludger appeared in the door, "what can the scout captain tell us to-night?"

This allusion to a part of his past life which the Captain regarded as most creditable, did more to soothe his wounded honor than all the old Scotchman's assurances. In fact, Daniel Bludger smiled

grimly, as he answered: "Black news, indeed, Mr. Eustace; but perhaps gratifying to you. The negroes, headed by carpet-bag adventurers, have organized and intend to take the government of this country from the white race."

"Well, why not let them have it?" asked Eustace.

"What!" cried the scout. "Give up this great valley to a race of slaves! Surely, you are dreaming, sir!"

"Better colonize them," suggested Robert, "and get another class of people."

"Give up our labor! Never, never!" cried Bludger. "They shall remain. This country shall be ruled by the whites, and the black man shall be always what nature intended—a slave."

"Amalgamation is too unpopular to be possible, I suppose," said Eustace, half inquiringly.

"By St. George, he will be a bold man who proposes such a thing," cried Bludger. "We shall not people this country with mulattoes. A man's life is not worth the purchase who breathes the idea."

"Bairns," said old Magruder, who, after taking his seat, had hitherto sat in seeming abstraction, "ye ha' touched a question on which the life o' this countrie depends. These men who ha' freed the blacks an' these men who ha' once owned them

will just abandon the problem thegither, and ye bairns will have to work it out. If ye fail, the negro will remain here, an ever-growing cancer in the vitals of your prosperity, until at last he will pull down and destroy the superior race."

"By St. George, that," cried the scout, with flashing eyes, "shall never be. This is a white man's land. The Caucasian shall rule. We will force—"

"But," interrupted Eustace, "the government will prevent that."

"Then, by George!" cried Bludger, rising, "I, for one, will go to the swamp, turn bandit, and—"

"Be hanged!" The words came from behind old Magruder's chair in a harsh, rasping voice; and next instant the scout was gazing at a hideous black dwarf, whose grinning head rose slowly above the old Scotchman's. Great round white eyes and enormous spade-like teeth shone in the glossy black of a countenance whose flat nose and expressionless features looked but a dark lump.

"What the devil is this!" exclaimed Bludger, starting, and involuntarily grasping his pistol.

"Haw! haw! haw!" laughed the grating voice of the dwarf, as he ambled off with a peculiar halting trot, "haw! haw! haw!" And looking back from the door in a half-cunning, half-idiotic way, he cried: "'Taint Devil, but Doc Cole; cos I'se

black like cole, and I'se er docter. Haw! haw! haw! Dat's sense!" and the negro, laughing foolishly, ambled away, chuckling and grating out, "Dat's sense! Haw! haw! Dat's sense, boss; dat's sense!"

An awkward pause ensued; and then Wiley, ever ready, interrupted old Magruder's half-uttered apology with the words: "Come; what of the water party? We are neglecting Miss Laura."

"A water party!" cried the scout. "By George, that reminds me of my errand. "Miss Magruder," turning to Laura, who bowed attention, "if Robert will come to my house and take the hounds, we will have a charming deer drive next Thursday. Will you go and see the sport?"

"If brother wishes," answered Laura, looking timidly at young Magruder.

"Let us to the parlor," said Bob, "and arrange the hunt."

The party then arose and left the dining-room. Before they separated for the night, the river *fête* and the deer drive were both fully planned, and the Scout Captain had forgotten that Bracken ever bit a gentleman.

CHAPTER III.

" O, it's a snug little island!
A right little, tight little island!"
The Snug Little Island.

THE festal night was come. Out from the willows' shadow into the moonlight on the river glided a graceful bateau. A silvery wake stretched across the yellow waves as the little boat sped onward, and in the dewy air floated a boatman's song. Laura, reclining in the tiny shell, trailed her hand through the water.

" How beautiful is night !" she sighed. " This is like a fairy boat upon a fairy river."

" Fairies made yon island," answered Robert, looking at his sister, with a half-mocking, half-caressing smile.

The girl heeded him not, but gazing still upon the waves, gently murmured: " The river's jewels, methinks, are never sullied, for the waters sparkle behind us which fell like grated ice at Minnehaha."

" Fairies ! All the work of fairies," laughed her brother. " Why, I remember boats sailing over the place where we dance to-night. A large

steamer struck a snag there, and sank during a spring overflow. Driftwood caught in the chains and upper works and formed a towhead. A village, which flourished where we now are, justified its name, Cave City, by tumbling into the water; and the old River Genius, with his wonted economy, built an island of the soil which he took from the town."

"By St. George!" cried Daniel Bludger, who was sitting in the prow, "some day the jurists will be puzzled to say whether the island belongs to the river god, the steamboat captain, or the mayor of the engulfed city."

A cloud obscured the moon. The paddle stopped, and the boat floated in silence. Across the water came these words:

"Vedu lib, Marie. He come up out de ribber. Dat's sense!"

If the light had returned at this moment it would have disclosed an angry scowl on the pale face of the scout, and glances of amused curiosity passing between the sister and brother. But the darkness and the voice continued: "Water war lappin de lebby top one time, an' de fields behind war green wid young corn an' cotton. Dat night Wild Rock war sot ter watch de low place in de bank, and I war in de cabin wid Dan Bludger. Marie, dat night I seed Vedu!"

"And what was the appearance of Vedoo?" asked a woman's soft tones.

The harsh voice continued: "He come like a big cock, high as a magnolia tree, steppin' along t'ward de lebby, an' pickin' de ground. Ebbery time he peck he make a hole. I look, an' dar war de Congo fast asleep on de 'bankment. I tried ter holler, but I couldn't. An' de big cock went right to de lebby, an' picked an' pecked 'till de water begin tricklin' ober. Den, all at once, I screamed. Bludger jumped up, an' run out. He seed Wild Rock sleepin'—he seed it all; an' 'fore I could git dar, he put his pistol to de Congo's ear an' shot. Den I felt sumfrin snap in my head, an' I nebber been right since. All night we worked; but I knowed it wa'n't no use. De break got bigger an' bigger; an' when mornin' come, water war pouring ober de crops tro a crevass bigger 'n a town, an' de Congo chief war gone."

When this charge was so singularly made against the scout, Laura drew back, shuddering, and Robert looked inquiringly toward him. But the darkness veiled these movements. Bludger remained silent, as if he had not heard the language, and Magruder, dipping his paddle into the water again, with a few vigorous strokes, pushed the bateau near the island.

Foliage had rapidly covered this alluvial ground.

Pavilions were erected, and it was now fitted up with sylvan walks and grottos. To-night lanterns gleamed here and there among the trees, and fire-baskets, filled with pine-knots from the hills, burned at the landing-places. The little boat came down with the current, a rich flood of moonlight burst from behind the cloud, music floated out upon the river, mingled with the rippling laughter of women. It was an entrancing scene—the murmuring water, the many-twinkling island, the moonlit night, softly charming as a dark-eyed lady's smile.

A gentleman of patrician bearing and somewhat Jewish cast of features, stood at the landing-place which Laura's boat approached. His cultured manner, iron-gray hair, and dark, steady eye, indicated the union of strength and talent which gives power to matured manhood. While gracefully and with a light compliment, assisting Laura from the bateau, he made a secret and peculiar sign which Bludger alone understood. These three, laughing and talking, walked toward a brilliant pavilion, where music and dancing were in progress. Robert was left to fasten the boat and follow. After he finished the mooring, however, he stood a moment looking at the scene; then lighting a cigar, he strolled along the shore.

Walking by the softly gliding water, breathing

the flower-scented air, Magruder was soothed by the silent night, the waning hum of voices, and the distant receding music. Regardless of his course, he rambled on, thinking of rich Percy Cecil, the man of influence, who had just carried Laura away with the calm grace that ever marked his demeanor. Was this man the creator or the product of success? Then he thought of Cecil's daughter, pretty, gray-eyed Bessie; and might have thought much more, but at this moment a rustle was heard, and a lovely sight greeted his eyes.

Just where the moonbeams fell through arching vines appeared a creature so rarely beautiful that Robert feared to breathe lest the vision should vanish. Her tapering finger raised as if in doubt, she stood inclining forward in her leafy bower. A white silk gown was fastened with a golden cord about her slender waist; waving masses of nut-brown hair half hid her graceful form, and like a wild melody was the dark beauty of her face.

Robert paused in wonder. "Fairy being," he said, advancing, "can I aid you in aught?"

She drew a little backward. Her lips half parted like an opening rosebud inlaid with pearls. "Yes!" she answered; "tell me why Colonel Magruder has wandered from his friends."

"To greet the Queen of Beauty in her bower," answered Robert, gazing like a votary at his shrine.

"As little queen as beauty!" the lady said, half sadly. She slowly sank upon a rustic seat, a hand like alabaster played with the masses of her hair, and a little arching kid-booted foot peeped shyly from her corded skirt.

"You are a queen, most lovely one," cried Magruder, passionately; "and Robert owns allegiance to your scepter."

Love laughed a moment in the changeful depths of the lady's great almond-shaped eyes; then sadness shadowed them, and she sighed: "You know not my taste—my ideal; not even my name!"

"What matter's thy name, sweet woman!" said Robert, leaning over her reclining form. "Only tell me how can I gain thy favor?"

"One only lives, and he in history," said the lady, rising, with a proud light in those wondrous eyes, "whose character is worthy the adoration of a woman."

"Who is this? The name—the name?" cried young Magruder, pressing eagerly toward the lady, who drew slowly away.

"The name!" cried she, turning and looking back, her lips half open, and merriment dancing in her eyes. "The name, ha! ha! is—Moses!" And, with another peal of silvery laughter, she disappeared in the darkness. A moment Robert was stupefied—then he pursued. Twice he fancied he

saw the white skirt disappearing around a bush. Once he was sure he heard the rustle of the silk and detected the perfume shed from the fair one's hair. But at the end of half an hour he abandoned the chase as hopeless, and went to the large pavilion. Here he stood watching the dancers, expecting to see among them the mysterious lady of the bower. Finding Bludger, who, returning from the supper pavilion, stood near him, presently he asked :

"What about Moses is it, Captain, that women like ?"

The scout looked at him quizzically for a moment, and replied : "His prohibition against converting their golden ornaments into calves !"

They were separated by the dancers at this instant ; and fortunately, for Colonel Robert Magruder would otherwise have been guilty of an indiscretion. His thoughts were immediately diverted, however, to Wiley Eustace, who was leading Laura from the dance to a seat near an open window. Robert followed, to rescue them, if possible, from danger, in the person of Mrs. John Frogg.

This good woman was a lady of reading and character. She was a large lady, with sharp, ferrety eyes, and a hooked nose, and when she walked she waddled. Mrs. Frogg was a woman with views,

which, like her reading, were derived chiefly from the patent outside of her husband's newspaper. So her views and her quotations were generally stereotyped. The good lady's trouble in life was lack of an audience; and she was accustomed to supply this want by lying in ambush near an open window at parties and capturing the unwary. Bob saw Wiley's danger, and made a gallant charge to bring him off in safety; but it failed.

Standing near the river, looking out in the moonlight on the semi-tropical scenes, Eustace said: "What a glorious night! Italy, with all its beauties, does not surpass this favored land. No where does a river so majestic flow through so rich a country. Surely, Miss Laura, the time is near when large ships will discharge cargoes on the levees, and great cities will flourish in this valley."

"True! So true!" exclaimed Madam Frogg, inserting her beak before Laura could reply. "'A thing of beauty is a joy for ever,' as we of the auncion regame wer wont to say. By my hallidome, we have great cities now. There, for instance, sits Saun Lewy."

Robert was in despair; but pretty Bessie Cecil, who, with a tactician's eye, saw the state of the engagement, now advanced, and asked, with the utmost innocence of manner: "Mrs. Frogg, what is your hallidome?"

"Yaw, haw, haw, yaw!" indignantly screamed the good lady, through her beak; and rising she waddled majestically to another window. The victory was complete, and after Bessie always said that "Yaw, haw, haw, yaw," was Mrs. Frogg's hallidome.

Magruder turned to Bessie to express his gratitude, but he was surprised to discover that the enthusiasm with which he thought of her earlier in the evening had been supplanted by a stronger feeling for the beautiful bower-woman. Happily Cecil's pretty daughter was not aware of this. Her father approaching, they jointly invited the party at the window to breakfast with them after the hunt. This was more than Mrs. Frogg could stand. So returning from her place of retreat, she accepted the invitation for herself. Cecil smiled and bowed and, even as he did so, made the peculiar sign to another iron-gray man across the hall. Cecil was always guarded and self-possessed—a thorough gentleman.

Soon after the boats were on the river again, diverging from the island to the homes of the different merrymakers. But even here—as his well-manned barge passed one bateau after another—the polished iron-gray gentleman, Percy Cecil, would make to one and another middle-aged man his secret, peculiar sign.

CHAPTER IV.

" On a dark summer night, 'way down in the bogs,
How plainly is heard the croak of the frogs!
Mammy Frog keeps exclaiming, 'Knee deep and no deeper,'
In order to warn any indiscreet leaper;
While from old Daddy Frog comes the deep croaking sound,
'Don't you tumble in here; you had better go 'round.'"

The Frogs.

THE morning after the island fête, Eustace, as in courtesy bound, called at Magruder's residence, to inquire after Laura's health; and Bludger called, regardless of the lady and courtesy, to discuss the coming deer drive. They were in the parlor with Miss Magruder, awaiting Robert's return from a field, whither he went earlier to start the cotton-pickers. The residence consisted of eight rooms—two either side of a large hall on both floors. A broad gallery extended along its front and was covered by a roof, which, beginning at the eaves, was supported by six posts made of as many pine trees, polished like ship-masts.

The front room on the left of the lower hall was called the parlor. India matting covered the floor. Windows, protected without by green shutters,

concealed their small defective glasses behind paper shades, which in turn were hid by muslin curtains. High-backed, stiff furniture of another generation afforded seats for the guests. On a centre-table stood an elaborate bronze lamp, with the family Bible, Shakespeare, and some books of travel. Plastered walls, white-washed, were adorned with photographs of friends and Southern notables, and over the high wooden mantel was a portrait of Calhoun. Two big brazen fire-dogs guarded the broad opening into the chimney, which was surrounded by a polished brass-wire fender.

Old Magruder, tablets in hand, was seated on the gallery near one of the parlor windows, with Bracken lying near his chair, and Doc Cole was in the yard under a fine old oak, vainly attempting the impossible feat of balancing his awkwardness on a toe.

"Dook!" said the old man. Doc desisted from his effort, and looked inquiringly at the speaker.

"It gars me greet, mon, to see ye sa lazy. Ye maun do somewhat. I can ha' no sarvent but Dinah, the cook, noo; an ye maun larn to work. I wi' na longer feed and clothe ye in idleness."

"Boss," said Doc, with an air of profound conviction, "dat's sense!"

"Mak a crop, mon, next year—can't ye, noo?"

Cole shut one eye, and gazed meditatively at a

cloud which then obscured the sun. Presently he said: "Sartin, Boss, but whar de land?"

"Tak some o' mine, ye loon; an' ye can get a mule—"

"Whar, Boss?"

"Buy one," cried the old man, impatiently, rising from his seat. "Where else do ye expect to get a mule?"

"Boss," said Doc, after a thoughtful pause, "De mule better be frowd in."

Old Magruder looked at Cole indignantly, and Cole gazed placidly at the cloud.

"Boss," he suddenly asked, "Whar de corn?"

"If I gie ye the corn an' mule," asked the old man, "can ye mak the crop?"

Doc meditated for a long time. After a while he approached the gallery counting on his fingers. "Boss," said he, "if yer frows in de clus an' de meat, too, b'lieve Doc mout pull fru!"

"Ye wretch!" exclaimed the old Scotchman, closing his tablets.

What might have been the result of this important negotiation will never be known, for Laura appeared now on the gallery with her visitors, and seeing the state of affairs she hastened Cole away.

"Come here, Doc!" she called; and as he shuffled towards her, she said to the guests, as if continuing a conversation: "Interest them in their

leaseholds by improving the places and giving them attractive names—this is our method."

"Now, Cole," she added, "conduct these gentlemen by the Serpentine path and show them Retirement, your pretty home."

Doc's big mouth opened and disclosed those great white teeth: "Haw! haw! haw! Dat's sense!" And beckoning to the scout and Eustace, he shuffled off, saying: "Come on, genlmn! Dis a way! Right down de turpentine walk ter torment —Dis a way!"

Ten minutes' walk by a winding path along the ridge dotted with pine saplings where the primitive growth was cut away, carried them to a small clearing in the forest. A cabin built of rough logs had once been adorned with a brick chimney and a plank shutter to its single window, and undressed plank had been nailed over the cracks, but Doc, who was strictly utilitarian in taste, had adapted the bricks of the chimney to the construction of a small furnace for boiling, and used the shutter and planks as fire-wood. Evidently he was now utilizing the airy remainder of the residence, for out of the hole where once hung the shutter, the head of an animal protruded. Its neck was long and bony, its mane filled with burs; its ears were cropped, and its romanesque nose was flanked by eyes glistening like big, light-colored glass marbles.

The visitors were inclined to regard this apparition as an ugly black mustang pony; but Doc quickly dispelled their illusion.

"Dar, genlmn," he said, proudly, "is Torment, an' dat is Belzebub!"

"Certainly, he is the *bête noir!*" murmured Eustace, as he compassed at a glance the scene.

Doctor Cole looked at the speaker with an injured air, and shuffled into the cabin. Abandoned thus abruptly by their guide, the gentlemen were in doubt how to proceed, when the tramp of a horse was followed by Robert, who emerged from the forest on his handsome bay.

The young man was annoyed by this exhibition of the result of Laura's method, and he carried his visitors a short circuit by some better tenant-houses, and then led them back to the residence, where they found old Magruder seated on the gallery, busily studying his tablets. He did not observe their approach; but looking into the parlor window, he said, "Send out the bairns, Annie Laurie."

"Why, father!" replied the girl's voice, "they passed you an hour since going to the place."

"Ah! yes," said the old Scotchman, hastily turning his tablets. "I ken, I ken."

"Here we are, back again," said Eustace; and inclining his handsome head to Laura, who ap-

peared at the window, he added: "We are charmed with the cottages of the tenants."

"Coom up, young men; coom up on the gallery. Laurie, bring chairs," said the old man; "I ha' somewhat, bairns," he added, as they ascended the steps, "somewhat to discourse upon to ye."

Eustace hastened to assist Laura with the chairs. Robert took one from her, as she came out, and Bludger, smiling grimly at being classed with the bairns, sat on the steps, with his back against a post, and remarked superciliously: "Go ahead then with the discourse."

When all were seated, the old man opened his tablets; and referring to the memoranda occasionally, he said: "Not many months will I be wi' ye, lads. My head is blossoming for the tomb. This day I mean to tell ye what an ould mon thinks o' the grave matter o' the negro—"

"Let us alone, old gentleman," interrupted Bludger, impatiently, "and we will manage him. Intelligence and courage will always outweigh numbers."

"Hardly at the ballot box," apologetically suggested Eustace.

"Yes, sir, there!" cried Bludger, rising, and standing upon the gallery. "By George! A thousand negro votes shall not overcome mine!"

"How will you avoid that result?" asked Mr. Eustace, still seated, and with a quiet smile.

Bludger's eyes flashed, and he began: "By a method—" Then checking himself, he turned, and sat down again near the post, remarking: "We have a method, sir—a method."

"Your methods I know not, Dan Bludger," said old Magruder; "but this ye may weel consider —no method, which interferes with the free exercise of citizens' rights, can be ultimately successful."

"Of course not," said Eustace. "A people's government ceases to exist when a majority of the people are deprived of the right to govern. If, for instance, the rulers are chosen by a minority, then we have no longer a democracy, but an oligarchy —a republic, you may style the thing, but there is no freedom—it is another Venice."

"Understand," cried Bludger, turning fiercely upon Eustace, "your negro citizens I do not recognize. We have ceased to own the individuals, but we have a property in the race. The Caucasian is the only citizen."

"But your position," said Wiley, decidedly, "conflicts with the constitutions—National and State—and the entire body of statutory law. Every election conducted on that basis is a public crime, and all your coadjutors are outlaws."

"Out with the constitution and statutes!" cried Bludger; "who made them? Men! Sir, there

is a higher law—the law of self-preservation, of race, of nature!"

"Such is the right of revolution," replied Eustace, "but I do not understand that to be the object or end of your method. Government, however, cannot stand if its foundations are shaken every time a constable is chosen. Destroy society, introduce a condition of anarchy, and the brute force of numbers will soon demolish your superior education and prestige, which you style courage. Would you preserve government for your ends, and yet violate its cardinal precepts at each election? This cannot long succeed. Each year you will educate a class of ruffians—train them in violence and fraud and disregard of the claims of law—until, some day, your tools will be your masters. Understanding your method, they will work it for their aggrandizement and your overthrow."

"How long," asked Bludger, with a sneer, "has England ruled India? The inferior races, sir, are incapable of self-government. As to our tools—ha! ha! ha!—when they grow too sharp we can break them!"

Robert, who stood during this conversation silently observant, looked curiously at Bludger, when he uttered this sentiment.

"What!" exclaimed Wiley, "destroy your own agents?"

"Of course," replied Bludger, picking his teeth with his knife-blade, "when they are guilty of treason to the cause."

"And do you call this a republic, Mr. Bludger, a government by the people and for the people?"

"Manifestly, yes!" said Bludger. "A government by the white people and for them. I do not recognize your black citizens."

"Dan Bludger," said old Magruder, rousing himself from seeming abstraction, "the negro is free, and a voter. Something must be done with him in this character." He paused in deep thought. Then a bright, kindly look came over the old man's face. "Coom now, bairns," added he smiling, "let us gie them ane trial. Let us treat them kindly, bairns, and like white men, and see if they ha' not the sense o' ither folk. It is na' gude to scare an' cheat the creatures. Let us make men and women of them. Coom, we will gie them a big barbecue the day after they help us to elect our men."

"Kill the fatted calf," laughed Bludger, "for the election will be gained."

"Do you think so, Bludger!" asked the guileless old man, with a boy's enthusiasm.

"As certainly," cried the Scout, still laughing aloud, "as Cole is bringing my big sorrel, yonder.

And now, good-day, I must be off. Come, Robert, let's arrange that hunt!"

Eustace also took leave, and Robert went after him. Following the ridge-road to its junction with the causeway, the three riders separated. Robert, from a feeling which he did not express, accompanied Eustace along the northern end toward the county town, where the latter was practising law. Bludger, going over the course which the young men came the evening we first saw them, reached the river, and riding a short distance up the levee, stopped at the Empire City.

Did you ever, gentle reader, see a mud-scow surmounted by a freight box-car? If yea, imagine scrawled in great letters upon one end of the box, the words, "Big Black Crow," on the other "Big Black Bar," moor your fancy by a tow-line to a stum at the levee just below the mouth of the Big Black Bayou, and you have the exterior of the Empire City. Like London between Ludgate Circus and Blackfriar bridge, it was a two-story city. Above was the department of grain, hay, heavy groceries and bread-stuffs. The lower section of the metropolis was devoted to dry goods, general merchandise and notions; and the inhabitants resided in the stern. Immediately north of the residences was a section of the city devoted to printing, and in the prow, which was called the "Northern Lib-

erties," reposed the "Big Black Bar." Here at eventide, the male citizen was wont to dispense tobacco and questionable liquor, but the bar's glittering attractions were now discreetly veiled with strips of Kentucky bagging. The printing section, however, was in full work.

On the end of an empty beer-keg, clutching a newspaper, blank upon one side, squatted the male inhabitant. Near him was a font of type and a hand-press. The citizen's head was flat, his mouth protruded and he was continually swallowing his chin; his rough-skinned, splotched face was adorned with two holes where a nose usually appears, his protruding paunch was large, and his little limber legs kept bending and jerking with the superincumbent weight, until the beholder expected to hear a ketchug and see him disappear, heels hindermost, into the river. This, gentle reader, was Frogg—John Frogg, editor of the *Big Black Crow.* By his side stood Madam Frogg, owner of the Empire City. One of the little man's small red eyes was fastened on the printed side of the paper, and the other, wandering restlessly over the array of goods, settled upon a crack in the floor under which the water was seen, and rested there as if he meditated leaping through.

"Veda, great Veda!" squeaked Madam Frogg, reading over his shoulder something on the

patent-outside, "work of India's mighty Brahma!"

"Wonderful are thy secrets, O Veda! knowledge of knowledge," wheezed the little man, continuing to read the advertisement.

"Innumerable the benefits which thou hast conferred on man, Child of Light! Bright Son of the Morning!" continued his wife's falsetto.

"But none better than that cure for every ill," wheezed the little man's bass, "Docther Snapshort's Sthomack Sthormer."

"Hallo! Frogg," cried Bludger, whose heavy form now darkened the door, "are you practising for an operatic exhibition?"

"Be gorrah, no!" wheezed Frogg, leaping down with the paper, "The top o' the mornin' to ye! We were only admiring the bootiful new ad. See now, will ye!" and he held up before Bludger's face the paper, disclosing a picture of Hindoos gathering herbs under the guidance of Brahma.

A sour smile crossed the scout's hard features. "Frogg," said he solemnly, "the *Crow* must attack the Vedoo!"

"Fight the Son of the Morning?" cried Mrs. Frogg in horror. "Abuse the Child of Light—oh! Froggie, never!"

"An lose the bootiful new pictur' and Schnap-

short's fifty for the ad," wheezed the little man, completely swallowing his chin, and growing very red, "niver, niver, niver!"

"Ordered by the ten!" muttered the scout, just loud enough for the man to hear, and made the peculiar sign; then he turned to Madam Frogg, and asked her about a boat passing up the river.

The effect on the little editor was miraculous. He turned pale, his limber knees bent outward until he nearly sat on the floor; then wriggling up, he approached Bludger, and pulled his sleeve. "This way, good Captain," he wheezed, leading toward the bar, "come an' try a leetle sthomack sthormer."

"By George! I never drink slops," said Bludger, stopping.

"Oh! Froggie, darling," said the good lady, who was watching this scene, "let us make the Captain a julep with some o' that fine old brandy. It is all but ready now," and she began to prepare the beverage.

"That's better," cried the scout laughing, "and now," he added, further softening as she handed him the drink, "you need not give up your advertisement, Frogg."

"How, indade?" asked the little editor, with a puzzled look. The scout smiled, and drained his glass.

"Insert these paragraphs," said the Captain, handing him some manuscripts, "they relate to a superstition gaining some ground with the negroes, but as far in origin from your Veda, notwithstanding the similarity of name, as Loango is from Calcutta."

"Oh! you're a jewel," said Madam Frogg to the scout, who, laughingly bade them good-day.

The amphibious couple, left alone, proceeded to make up the paper. The outside was stereotyped to order, but the inside demanded care. First they set up a new and original story, called "Grim John, the Blear-eyed Bandit," copied out of a book of original stories that Mrs. Frogg inherited from her grandmother. Then they inserted a list of advertised letters in the post-office, to wit, two; and a short list of names under this inscription: "The *Crow* thanks the following for cash favors." A column under the heading, "Honorable mention by Neighboring Journals of Repute," contained commendations of the *Crow* by the Turkey Creek Gobbler, and the Spider Bayou Stigeree. The remaining available space was filled with Bludger's paragraphs, interspersed with such new and startling sentiments as these: "Is Philip dead? No, but he is sick." "Let up, boys; the Doctor says he'll die." "Cry havoc, and let slip the dogs of war!" "Saddle White Surrey for the Field."

"Shake not thy gory locks at me." "There's music in the air!" The *Crow* was famous for these stirring paragraphs—they were Frogg's campaign cries. No reader ever had an idea what they meant. But in this particular issue, taken in connection with Bludger's Vedoo warnings, they produced among the small circle of subscribers an unpleasant impression that the devil was about to break loose, and there was no telling in what direction he would come.

CHAPTER V.

"Morn,
Waked by the circling hours, with rosy hand
Unbarred the gates of light."

Paradise Lost.

ROSY-FINGERED morn was gilding the Eastern sky, but darkness lingered under the great oaks which guarded Laura's home. The lady slept. Her head rested on a rounded arm half covered by her tangled tresses. Dewy air, laden with the freshness of dawn, floated through the window and kissed her parted lips. The lady smiled. A mocking-bird on an oak bough trilled a melody to coming day; and Laura woke. Far off in the forest she heard the music of the hounds; under the oaks a hunter's horn was sounded, and, starting from her couch, she hastened her toilet, to join the hunting-train.

Soon Laura, with her brother, was riding along a winding path through the woods, to meet the approaching pack. John Frogg was stationed at this crossing. He had often stood here before, and complained that he never saw a stag; but as

the noise of the dogs came nearer now, he was startled by the unexpected, and hoped in his heart that the deer would change its course. He heard a bounding thud, the dry branches cracked, a shiver ran through his limbs, and an antlered buck leaped into the road, gazed at him a moment and disappeared.

"Ugh!" exclaimed Frogg, "too fast! If I just had another chance!"

As he spoke, a little doe trotted into the opening, stopped and looked at him wonderingly with her soft, pleading eyes. The chorus of approaching dogs startled the gentle animal, and putting back her delicate ears she walked into the forest. A moment later, the editor aimed his shot-gun at the place she had left and discharged both barrels. The deafening report echoed and re-echoed through the swamp, and before it died away the trampling horses were heard in all directions bringing the other hunters to congratulate him.

"Hello! Frogg," cried Bludger who rode up first on his strong sorrel, "where's the game?"

The little man made no reply; but Robert, who now brought his sister to the scene, listened to the receding music of the pack, and said: "The deer runs fast—evidently untouched."

"Won't it come back again?" asked Bessie, who rode up with Eustace and her father, "I should so

like to see a wild deer running through the woods!"

Robert forgot the island lady as he gazed on Bessie's flushed cheeks and sparkling eyes.

"By St. George! young lady," cried Bludger with his hoarse laugh, "you should see that one then, for it's running like the wind. But no deer will come to this place again until the tribe forgets the tradition of Frogg's bombardment."

Putting to his mouth a carved hunting horn which hung at his side, the scout sounded the dogs' recall. Led by Cecil the party now moved toward his residence. Every few rods, the Captain sounded his musical recall, until they entered the causeway a half mile from their destination with the noisy pack yelping and leaping about their horses' legs.

The cavalcade, turning from the causeway into an avenue arched with water-oaks, stopped presently before a handsome gate. Men-servants were waiting to take their horses. Through well-kept grounds, Cecil escorted his guests to the entrance of his beautiful residence. Quadroon maids conducted the ladies to their rooms, where they found dresses, brought in the carriages destined to convey them home. Small cups of black coffee were served; and the visitors were notified that breakfast awaited their pleasure in the latticed room.

Half an hour later, Bessie, simply arrayed in a morning robe, with a single white rosebud in her hair, presided, at a table ornamented with floral designs, over a repast of fruits and cantaloupe melons, deftly serving the Hyson tea and pale Pedang coffee. Cecil, seated as one of the guests, in his charmingly graceful manner gave life without leading the conversation; and his occasional unobserved glances led the well-trained waiters to stimulate faltering gourmands with light breakfast wines. In a short time these things were removed, and then kingfish and Spanish mackerel were succeeded by broiled quails, and these by steaks of veal and venison, accompanied by the breads and cakes and waffles for which the South is famous. The company afterward rising betook them to the garden, where among rare plants they reposed on wicker-work settees, and ate ices—orange, lemon and vanilla—grateful in the growing warmth of the day.

"To-morrow night, the season closes at Kooper's Well," said Bessie to Robert, who was handing her an ice, "and next day they are to have ever so much amusement."

"Indeed!" said he, "and are you going?"

"Yes," said Laura, who was passing, "Bessie and I are going in our carriage, and you are to ride as escort."

"And I?" asked Eustace.

"Oh! you may go along with brother, if you are good," laughed Laura, going to a hammock, and beginning to swing.

She was very pretty lying in the hammock, robed in white muslin and pink scarf. Eustace sat by her side. When the ices were removed, each guest was handed a japanned tray, on which was a tiny glass set—a cup, a pitcher of Mocha, a flask of old French brandy and a bowl containing a few lumps of sugar. Laura sipped the coffee. The others, mixing the ingredients to their tastes, varied the compound from the Roman potation of Madam Frogg to the *Café à la Française* of pretty Bessie Cecil.

Looking through an open window into the tasteful library where hung a fine painting of the cave scene in "Cymbeline," Laura said: "It seems incredible that one mind could produce all that Shakespeare wrote. He must owe much to his contemporaries."

"And much doubtless," said Eustace "to successive editors, for—"

"Oh! yes," interrupted Madam Frogg, "most folks owe successful editors. But I often tell Froggie darling to cheer up, 'there's music in the air,' and—"

"By George! Cecil," cried Bludger loudly, look-

ing at Laura and Eustace, who were now conversing in low tones, "how much more is there of this tomfoolery?"

Eustace looked up surprised; but Cecil smiling blandly stepped before him, facing the scout, and gently remarked: "Ah! my self-made Daniel, why will you ever humble us by showing how you have risen from the state of an ox-cart man to be an ox-driver still?"

Bludger's harsh face grew purple with rage, but before he could speak, Cecil, gracefully waving his hand, touched a silver bell. A quadroon boy appeared, dressed like a little sailor.

"Paccolett," said Cecil, "horses for the guests."

The boy ran into the house; and at this signal the visitors prepared to leave. When they reached the gate at the avenue, the gentlemen's horses, fed and groomed, were there, held by the negroes who took them at arriving. The ladies entered the carriages, the gentlemen mounted, and like the links of a broken chain the morning's company fell apart.

Eustace, who had observed John Frogg's silence during the breakfast, allowed young Magruder to ride by the carriage and entertain Laura and Mrs. Frogg, while he remained behind to cheer the amphibious editor. This worthy was moodily regarding his great gun, which he carried across the pom-

mel of his saddle, and apparently was little enlivened by the efforts of Wiley. Near the place where the ridge road branched off, this gentleman galloped to the front, and calling Robert, said : "Frogg is in the dumps about his shooting exploit, Bob, and if you take him through the woods he may kill a squirrel and regain his spirits—Mrs. Frogg—ah! —can be escorted by me."

Magruder looked at Eustace with a smile. "Take the greatest care of Madam Frogg," he said and, reining back his horse, joined the editor. Shortly after, they turned into a bridle-path leading through the swamp toward the river. In the densest part of the tangled undergrowth Magruder dismounted, and Frogg, at his bidding, ruefully followed his example.

"Now, sir," said the young man, suiting his actions to the words, "I tie your horse's bridle to the crupper of Mameluke, put them in the path, and say, 'Go!'" The bay galloped off at the word, leading Frogg's hack. Seeing his companion's consternation, Robert said: "They will come up safely at our gate."

"Yis, be jabers!" wheezed the little editor, struggling with his huge gun and cartridge-box, "but where will we come up?"

"Oh! here is the bayou," laughed Robert, pointing to a sluggish stream which moved between

high banks, covered with tangled vines and overhanging trees; and, parting the bushes, he disclosed a path leading down to the water where two boats were moored.

"Now, Frogg," he said, "load your columbiad, and put it into the larger boat. Point over the stern. There! That will do. Now help me to disguise the boats with green boughs. Fact is, Frogg, we are going to float down to the salt-lick —and if you are fortunate we will get a buck."

"Observe, however," he added, as they stuck the last green limb into the boats, and his critical eye pronounced both ready for action, "observe, Frogg, that I lead, in the 'Bessie,' and you with the 'Terror' bring up the rear."

While speaking, the young man lay prone under the leaves in his trim little bateau, and pushed out with his hand into the stream. But the editor's Irish blood was up. He had no inclination for the rear, and shoving his big dug-out ahead of the Bessie, he wheezed: "Let Terror lade in this glowrious warr!"

Robert, under his canopy, saw the editor's big gun now pointing straight at his head. "Frogg!" said he, "in part of my instructions, I was somewhat hasty. Change your cannon to the prow, and, the moment you see a deer dining shoot behind its shoulder."

The Irishman shifted his ordnance, and the boats passed down the bayou like small floating islands. Presently a dry stick snapped on the bank, a trampling followed, and they rounded a sharp bend, into the very midst of a herd of deer. An eddy at this moment caught the Terror, and it careened. The editor eagerly raised his great shot-gun to his shoulder, leaned back over the boat's side, and, as usual, fired both barrels. When the smoke cleared away, the deer were gone—and so was Frogg!

The Terror was lodged in the bushes bottom upward, and its late occupant—or the visible part of him, which was all above the chin—was sputtering in the ooze like a small geyser.

As the Bessie floated by, Robert was relieved to see the editor gain the bank, gun and cartridge-box in hand. Telling him to follow the stream, and in ten minutes he would reach the Empire City, the young man took a paddle from the bottom of his boat, and began shoving it down the stream. His intention was to visit the cotton-pickers, but he was destined to meet an adventure before reaching the field.

Just as his green-dressed bateau floated from the bayou's mouth, he saw in the river before him a little bark canoe, so light and airy, that it barely touched the water. In this, gazing curiously at his

craft, was the beautiful island lady. She stood as gracefully as a fawn, her paddle suspended, her breast heaving, her wondrous eyes scanning the approaching object, as if ready for instant flight.

Magruder saw her alarm, and, divining its cause, stripped off the green boughs and threw them into the river. Then the girl's rippling laugh floated over the water, and laying her paddle in the boat, she awaited his approach.

"Sir Hunter," laughed the girl, as the young man's boat neared hers, looking mischievously into its emptiness, "What have you done with your game?"

"Why, fair lady, call me a hunter?" asked Robert, who cared not to assume in this handsome woman's eyes the glory of Frogg's exploit.

"Sir Shooter, then," said the girl; "for surely I heard a gun, and you have no companion."

"Ah! there he comes, poor man!" she added, laughing, and shading her eyes with one of those white tapering hands, "Why did you try to drown him in the ooze?"

Magruder looked in the direction indicated by her eyes, and there, sure enough, was poor Frogg looking like a mud baby, and struggling through the willows by the river with his cartridge-box and gun.

"Oh! you wicked man," she laughed, "to desert your comrade in misfortune! You will never be a Moses! But," she added, "he must not see me!" and with a dexterous sweep of the paddle she shot her light canoe behind the point of land above the bayou.

Robert paddled the Bessie after her boat. "Beautiful creature," said he, "will you tell me how I can be a Moses?"

A moment the lady looked earnestly into his face, then her great eyes beamed with lofty aspiration, and she spoke in deep musical accents: "Be true, Robert Magruder, to thy nature. Use thy highest powers. Let thine aim be as exalted as thy strength; and thou may'st earn that title!"

"But Moses," said the young man, with an admiring puzzled look, "led his people from bondage into freedom. My people, though unsuccessful in war, are not in bondage. If I were a negro, now—"

The girl's start stopped him. A deep blush, suffusing her beautiful face and neck, left them like a bust of alabaster. "Magruder," she cried, in her rich, entrancing tones, "thy heart is too great to be confined by race—thy people, Robert Magruder, is the brotherhood of man!"

He gazed enraptured on the lovely woman, whose countenance seemed lighted with the spirit

of a priestess, and bending toward her he exclaimed: "Oh! you should be Moses' wife!"

The fire died out of the fair enthusiast's features, merriment twinkled in her eye, and her coraline lips wreathed like vines about the pearls, as she answered with her silvery laugh: "Mrs. Moses! Mercy, what a name!"

"This masquerading goes too far!" cried the young man, thoroughly provoked. "I will know its meaning!" Confident of his ability to outrow the girl, Robert dropped his paddle into the water. A brisk wind was blowing across the river. Quick as light, a taper mast arose and a little sail fluttering over the lady's tiny shell filled with the breeze. The Bessie's prow nearly touched the bark canoe, when the latter shot away, and before Robert made fifty strokes he saw that pursuit was hopeless. Turning his bateau again down the river, he soon landed at the cotton-field.

The cotton, among the frost-touched plants, looked like snow drifts in a winter coppice. White-oak baskets sat in the rows. Here and there a negro, with a bag strapped on his shoulder, was picking the fiber from the bolls. A creaking ox-cart moved from a distant point carrying hampers of picked cotton to the gin-house. And now and then could be heard from parts of the field the negros' cotton-picking songs.

Robert approached the structure at the edge of the wood, whence the hum of a gin-stand proceeded, and entering the great roof which stood on twelve large upright timbers, he went directly to the lint-room, and saw the shower of fleece falling on the polished floor like a driving snow storm. Very dusty black fellows, festooned with flakes of white, moved about in there carrying the fleece to the press. Like a good manager, the young man then went to the ground, and inspected four patient mules trudging in a circle under the shed, and occasionally wagging a long ear in patient protest against the imposition.

Seeing that all was working properly, he followed a path into the woods. Here, seated near a little creek that ran into the bayou, was Doctor Cole. A pile of splits, softening in the water, was to be worked into the basket which he was making. Awhile Magruder stood, and watched the basket growing under the negro's nimble fingers. Suddenly he said, "Cole, what is Vedoo?"

The black dwarf looked up at the questioner with a stare of wonder. "Vedu speak in de tunder," he muttered; "an' strike wid lightnin' flash." Pointing to a blasted oak, he added, "Vedu hit dat tree!"

"Doc," said Robert, "I have seen a beautiful girl at the island." The dwarf grinned. "Is this

Marie?" The Doctor nodded his ugly head. "Cole," continued the young man, "who is Marie?"

An ashen hue spread over the negro's face, and he was silent.

"Tell me," said Robert, "and you shall have this!"

Doc eyed the gold coin in Magruder's hand. Cupidity and fear contended in his grotesque features. Then rising, he took the money, and hissed in Robert's ear: "Marie—Vedu queen!"

CHAPTER VI.

"The salutiferous fountain."
St. Ronan's Well.

AT a remote period in the Earth's history, this country, the scene of our story, was under the ocean. Layers of sand and clay extend hundreds of feet below the surface, and embedded in these are found the remains of antedeluvian sea-animals. Spots exist, however, in the monotonous expanse of clay hills and alluvial valleys, which differ so widely from the surrounding country as to induce the belief that they are summits of old mountains whose bases are buried in oceanic deposits. Limestone and other rock crop out at these places like the result of subterranean convulsions. Mineral wells are found in the upheaved strata. The verdure contrasts with the neighboring forests, and the general effect resembles mountain scenes.

To one of these wells was bound the carriage which rapidly passed over the ridge road from the gate of Magruder's residence about sunrise on the morning after the deer-drive. Cole, arrayed in a

suit of Robert's old clothes, sat behind the bright bay mares with the dignity of a stuffed figure. He was a remarkable driver! In fact Doc would repeatedly have wrecked the expedition but for the timely interference of Eustace and Robert, who rode on either side of the carriage. The dwarf's supply of excuses, however, was equal to every demand; and if he ran into a gully or tumbled off a bridge, he immediately exclaimed, savagely eyeing the mares, "'T want me, but Bessie!" or "'T was all dat dish-face Laury!" And as none of his passengers were killed outright, the explanations were received.

Laughing at their mishaps the party went merrily onward. They stopped at mid-day in an oak and hickory grove by a creek just at the entrance to the hill country. Resting in the shade, the travellers ate a lunch which was brought in the carriage. The long gray moss, which hung from the limbs of the oak trees almost to the ground, drew from Eustace the remark, that a mattress-factory should be established. The sun was halfway down the western sky, when taking a last draught from the cold spring that bubbled out of a sandstone bed, the little party resumed their journey, and night was far advanced as the carriage, slowly passing by two flaming lamps, entered a wood twinkling here and there with a star-like

candle, and stopped before a long row of glittering lights which streamed from the windows of a hotel.

After breakfast next morning, the girls, leaving old Magruder to converse with Cecil on the veranda of the hotel, walked across the green with Robert and Wiley, to a pagod-built structure which covered the well. A mule, ridden by a small darky to the end of a path, drew a long rope which, passing over a wheel in the roof of the building, hoisted the enormous bucket. Entering the pagoda with several other couples, they found a little old gray-haired man dipping the water which was just raised and pouring it into glasses set in a frame.

"Hear! ye people," cried the little gray-head, briskly bustling about, "hear the history of the wonderful well! Ah! my dear young lady," he said in a low confidential aside to Laura, "let me give you this cool tumbler right from the rocky depths!" and he handed her a glass of the water.

Raising his voice again, he cried: "Hear the history! A good man, Kooper, was travelling this Indian trail to the Crescent City, when he one day stopped his wagon here and rested under the shade. So attractive seemed the spot, that he bought the land for a song; and remembering the thirst which consumed him, he determined to dig a well for travellers. The good man, Kooper, was

poor, and being also honest" (Gray-head winked familiarly at Eustace), "the well descended slowly. Not twenty feet were dug, when the workmen struck a rock as hard as flint. Day after day they blasted and bored, until the good man's funds were exhausted, and he was fain to abandon the work."

"Poor man!" said Laura, quietly replacing her untasted glass in the frame, "what a disappointment!"

"In the dark hours of that night, as the good man lay meditating," continued the little gray-head, "a shape passed before him without discernible form, and a voice which spoke to his soul: 'Dig, good man, dig!' So Kooper mortgaged his land, raised money and started again. At last the rock was cut through, but only to meet another and tougher stone; and the borrowed money was spent and the hole was dry. The good man gave up; but in the darkness of night again passed before him the shapeless form which uttered the voice, without words, to his soul: 'Dig, good man, dig, and you shall find!' Kooper arose, and went forth and begged. He told his visions, and men said he was wild!"

"And quite correct, they were, by George!" cried the scout, who had just entered the pagoda.

The little man looked at him fiercely, but continued without further noticing the interruption:

"He got the money; and the workmen cut through this rock. But their labor was in vain, for they encountered a harder one still. The great hole was now a wonder—nearly a hundred feet deep, and perfectly dry. Now the workmen became alarmed and said they would go no lower. His money, property and credit were all gone—the good man was utterly broken. But again in the darkness of night the formless shape passed before him, and the voice without words: 'Dig, good man, dig! and you shall find life for millions!' The good man arose and woke the tired workmen. He entreated them to go down yet again. At last they consented to make one more blast. All the morning they bored and fixed their mine, for they determined to make the last a big explosion. Just as the mid-day sun looked down the black cavern, the burning fuse touched the powder. The report was dull, and the men thought the blast a failure. But immediately a low rumbling thunder was heard in the well, which increased to a wild wail of triumph, as if the imprisoned spirit was escaping, and the men listening above heard far down in the rocky depths the trickling water!"

"Not pleasant at first, my dear child," said the little man, pausing and looking at Bessie, who had returned to the frame a scarcely touched glass; "but you'll love it when you acquire the taste!"

"Fastening a bucket to their rope," continued the gray-head as he dipped out the water for the visitors, "they drew up some of this fluid" (holding up a glass). "It was, as you see, dark, bad-tasting, and its odor was awful. The men turned away in disgust, and poor Kooper sank down in despair. A rigor seized him, which was followed quickly by the fatal fever. Parching thirst burned the good man, and he asked for the brackish water. The workmen said he would die, and handed him the bucket. He seized it eagerly and drank a deep long draught. Even as he handed it back, and fell over at the root of a tree, profuse perspiration started out on him. They carried him to his house. Next morning they came to bury the good man, and he met them in perfect health!"

"By St. George! Miraculously false!" laughed the scout.

The little gray-headed man glared savagely at the speaker, but in a moment he turned to others, and continued with his bland smile: "The fame went abroad. Hundreds flocked to the waters and were cured of the malaria of the swamps. Houses were built. And now the well is literally 'life for millions!'"

As Eustace and Laura were the last to leave the pagoda, the little man called them. "Drink this, for my sake!" said he, handing them two glasses

of the water. With an effort they managed to drain the tumblers.

"Ah! I knew you were good children," cried the little old man gleefully. "I began to fear I was going to seed. When I kept a big hotel in Vicksburg, swindlers often came to me and borrowed a hundred dollars, but now," he said sadly, "they never ask for more than one. They have very nice instincts—they have. I fear I'm going to seed."

"Certainly," said Laura, "I never met a nicer old gentleman."

"Ah! my dear young lady," said the little man, with a grateful smile, "one property of this water I told none of them. I reserved it for you." Looking then quietly at Wiley and the lady he said: "When a man and woman drink this water together on the day the rock first gave its treasures —and this is the anniversary—they will wed ere the end of the coming year, provided she becomes Queen of the Tourney and he the Forester King."

They laughed and retired, and the little gentleman stood beaming on them, until a clump of shrubbery hid their forms. Robert had taken Bessie to a ten-pin alley, where they were now making miniature thunder, and Eustace led his companion toward a place where some swings were erected.

Midway the green they met old Magruder, who

exclaimed : "Lassie, coom awa'! The gallants are making ready their sport." Leaving Eustace, the father and daughter walked toward the veranda, but a curious black object attracted them. It appeared to be a monkey climbing a sapling and slipping down. Approaching the spot, where some merry boys were cheering the fun, they discovered Doc engaged in the attempt of taking a purse of silver from the top of a greased pole. He had on his driving suit, which by this time presented a dilapidated appearance. Just as they reached the ground, Cole took the purse, and sliding down he saw them.

"Boss," he cried, running in triumph to the old Scotchman, his big white eyes stretched to their widest, and every tooth exposed, "we's got it—de famly 's dun tak de puss !"

"Oh ! Doc," exclaimed Laura, "look at your beautiful new clothes !"

The dwarf's countenance fell, and he gazed ruefully at the stains.

"Gang, sir !" cried the old man, "an' do na' coom before me again 'till ye cover the grease spots !"

So saying Magruder walked stiffly away with his daughter, leaving the negro standing in abasement under a tree.

Eustace, when abandoned by his fair companion, stood thoughtfully where she left him for several

minutes. He was recalling the last glass at the well, and he might have remained thus longer, but a touch on the arm interrupted his revery. Turning, he confronted the little gray-head, who whispered with a knowing wink: "You want a horse—*you* do!"

Wiley smiled, for a horse had formed part of his meditation, and the little man added: "I've got him for you—the finest and quickest of them all, and thoroughly trained!"

"My own horse is here," said Eustace, "the one I rode, and he can carry me in the tournament."

"Seen him!" said the gray-head, "won't do at all. Why that scout's big sorrel has been practising for a week. Follow me!"

Half amused, Eustace went after the little man, who led him towards a woodland road, looking back occasionally and saying, as he bobbed along: "Never do! Couldn't even make time! The pretty girl must be queen. We must beat that captain. Orleans only can do this!"

CHAPTER VII.

"There's some that gar the causeway reel
With clashing hufe and rattling wheel,
And horses canterin'."
Epilogue to St. Ronan's Well.

A GAME which is really equestrian grace-hoops has been well-nigh overweighted by the too formidable name of Tournament. The mailed knight's warlike pastime had little in common with the sport of modern gentlemen. Each was a training for war, it is true; but they differed in essentials as widely as the spirits of the ages. Prowess was the talisman of the knight, who conquered by the force of his arm and the strength of his armor. The cavalryman relies on coolness, address, and skill in the use of his weapons. The end of the mediæval game was to cultivate reckless valor and that chivalric spirit which would gladly hazard all in a deed of desperate courage. Calm equipoise, freedom from excitement and the spirit to act amidst the rain of death with the rapidity and precision of a dress parade is the condition of mind that the modern play would produce. Dan-

ger is necessarily eliminated from the latter sport, by the change in the nature of weapons. Knights could amuse their ladies with mimic war in an age when armor so far surpassed arms, that two legions contended for a day in Italy without inflicting a wound. But the gentlemen who shall entertain their sweethearts by shooting Gatling guns at each other, will create an impression more gory than agreeable. If destructiveness is the object of warlike training, the modern play is more efficacious. Twenty of these men, clad in gray blouses and armed with their dull-barreled rifles, would easily overcome King Arthur and his knights encased in glittering mail and wielding their ponderous battle-axes.

No doubt can exist of the beauty or efficacy of this now discarded amusement. Terms of chivalry are as inapplicable to it, however, as to Polo or the exercises of a company of Royal Lancers; and their use, by exciting vague anticipations in the hearer of something indefinitely grand, has too often caused a feeling of half contempt for the reality. This has gradually grown until the game is superseded by base-ball and similar amusements. But to our description!

A track of a mile in length, shaped like the figure eight, enclosed within either loop a pyramid of seats, on which was now assembled the beauty

of a state. Twenty arches spanned the course, and from each dropped as the rider approached a small wire hook holding a ring. The mile had to be covered in two minutes, and success was measured by the number of these rings the rider brought into the goal. Laura and Bessie, escorted by old Magruder, were approaching one of the pyramids of fluttering ribbons and gay loveliness, when a young man arrayed in riding costume, with light top-boots, which he tapped with a small whip, stared insolently at them and remarked aloud: "Puty guls, be Jove!" He was the embodiment of impudent nonchalance. Too preoccupied to notice the affront, the old Scotchman was hurried on by his daughter, and Bessie, half frightened, followed them.

As they took seats, Robert joined them, and the tourney began. A knight in blue rode first, and his spirits were the hue of his armor, when he came in without a ring. Others followed, with varying success, but the game was too ill contested to be interesting.

"Ah! ha! I shall have to join these boys!" said a cast-iron looking old fellow, who sat among the girls. "They are making a botch of the play!"

"We of the auncion regame did things better, General Griggles," cried an old lady behind him. "But, as I often tell dear Froggie, 'Times are

changed, and manners changed with 'em.' Ah! 'tis sad, General Griggles!"

"Sad, indeed, Mrs. Frogg," replied the General. "But here comes a lad of another mettle—do you know him?"

"Oh! I know the great sorrel, General Griggles. 'A thing of beauty is a joy forever,' and never, never is forgot! That is surely Daniel Bludger's horse."

"The devil!" cried old Griggles. "Ah! beg pardon, madam—but I hoped it was my carpet-bag brother in the law. However, the fellow rides well, and is taking all the rings—Ah! ha! By Jingo, there he missed!"

The scout, in fact, dressed as a Saracen, was reviving the interest of the spectators. The strong sorrel flew over the course and the first rings fell on his lance, amid a languid approval. But as ring after ring glanced upon the pole, hands began to clap, the excitement revived, and the Saracen galloped under the last arch with eighteen rings amid thunders of applause.

"Gude for Bludger!" cried old Magruder. "No one can beat that ride! I am proud o' the ould swamp, Laurie!"

"Ah, me, he can't be surpassed," said Griggles regretfully. "But here comes another to try."

Laura turned absolutely pale when a new

knight in black armor immediately galloped into the course. No one else, however, bestowed any attention on him. The popular verdict was already for the scout, and the judges hardly noticed the start of the unexpected contestant. He was half round the track, and carried ten of the rings, when the fickle fancy of the crowd was caught by the long, quick gallop of the thoroughbred chestnut, and the easy carriage of its rider. As they gracefully swung through the cross of the figured course, another and another ring was taken. Anon the splendid animal came tearing down the homestretch, and when he glided through the cross again, bearing the twenty rings, there burst on the air that peculiar exultant yell, which the greatest standard in the world has hesitated to face and been glad to reckon among its defenders.

On the light pole, misnamed a lance, which Eustace carried, one of the judges now hung a crown of flowers. The young man reined back his horse, and then rode at a slow pace between the two pyramids of handsome women. He had proceeded only a few steps when these fair ladies, as if by concert, dropped their eyes and drew haughtily back. Eustace glanced along the sea of averted faces with the same start of surprise which the scout's conduct had occasioned at Cecil's breakfast. Laura alone was leaning eagerly

forward, a look half anxiety, half pleasure on her classic features. The rider smiled and, bowing low, laid the crown at her feet, and this charming girl, raising it herself, placed the flowers on her graceful head. Whatever the Southern women may have thought of the adventurer, who carried off the prize, they were not prepared to affront the Magruders, and, with a little flutter of excitement, maid and matron crowded around the new-made queen.

In the confusion, a lad caught the bridle of Wiley's horse, and told the rider that General Mack wanted him. Following the boy, he found the little gray-head awaiting him behind a coppice.

"Good, good!" exclaimed the little man, as Eustace dismounted, "you have done finely, and now put on this coat."

In spite of Wiley's protestation, General Mack, removing the armor, slipped a green blouse over the young man's shoulders, and said, pushing him forward: "Now, sir, yonder are the foresters. Go and be king!"

A cubic block with faces a foot square was placed for a target upon a stand on one side of the cross, and at the other, a hundred yards distant, the riflemen assembled. They were to shoot across the track, between the two pyramids of spectators. Clad in green blouses belted at the

waist, the foresters presented an appearance as striking as the knights. Some of the latter had changed their garments, and were among the riflemen. Of this number was the scout, who, approaching Eustace, as the latter came toward the cluster of green-coated men, said in a low tone: "King for your queen will I be—mark it—by George!"

When Eustace reached the stack of guns, he was surprised, for they were not the army rifles which he expected to find, but long slim-barreled guns, with stocks of a peculiar shape. He saw at once that defeat was inevitable if he shot with these arms.

"Gentlemen," said he, addressing the foresters, "a gun like these I never saw before, and I am unwilling to contend with such arms. But if any of your number will try with me the revolvers, I will abide that test."

A frown settled on the foresters' brows menacingly. "Now, by St. George!" cried the scout, "nobody asked you to join us. And as to your threat—"

"Come, Bludger!" said a handsome black-eyed giant, laughingly stepping before the scout, and glancing along the frowning faces of the others, he said: "This rifle is prescribed by our rules; but a stranger shall not be compelled to use it. King you cannot be without shooting with this

gun, but you may have the chance of showing that you can outshoot a king with the pistol."

"Last season I was king of the foresters," he added with a good-natured smile; and taking a revolver from a young man who offered it, he fired at a white spot on a tree some sixty yards away, and grazed its edge. "Now, sir!" he said, laughing and handing Eustace the pistol, "beat that, if you can, and you beat Alex Norman." Eustace, who was an expert with the weapon, obliterated the white mark. The black-eyed giant bowed with the courtesy of a king, and complimented him upon his success.

Already the riflemen had ceased to regard Eustace and his new friend and begun to shoot at the target. One round established the scout's superiority, for Norman, who alone could contend with him, was excluded by the rules from becoming king twice in succession.

When the scout put his last bullet in the little black spot at the centre of the target's face, he dropped the stock of his gun on the ground, and turning to Eustace, said sneeringly: "By George, the queen belongs to me!"

The young man's fine curvilinear face worked convulsively, and his upper lip quivered. An eagle-like glance shot from his dark eyes. But in a moment, he checked himself, and drew back his

half-advanced foot, saying, with a cold smile: "Ladies, sir, are not to be made the prizes of target shooting."

Laura saw their movements, and divined the words which she was too distant to catch. "Robert," she said, bending towards her brother an imploring look, "you shoot better than this scout!"

Young Magruder comprehended his sister's appeal. He made no reply. But leaving her side, he appeared a moment after, clad in green among the foresters. Taking a rifle from the stack, he fired and obliterated the black centre and Bludger's bullet mark together.

Another face of the block was now turned, and before the silent gaze of five hundred spectators, Magruder and the scout prepared to test their fortunes. Both were noted for skill in the use of this peculiar rifle, and the interest of the assembly rose almost to the point of excitement.

Bludger shot first to display his skill. His harsh features and strong angular form appeared incapable of feeling, but the passage of words with Eustace had caused a slight quickening of the pulse. Knowing this he stood for a full minute, before he raised the rifle; then slowly placing it to his shoulder, he fastened the sight upon the black spot and fired. The bullet struck

a little to the right of the centre. The scout frowned. Robert, laughing, took his stand and fired, again obliterating the centre spot.

Little enthusiasm greeted Magruder's victory. The scout was a favorite with the people, who were inclined to consider him unjustly deprived of both prizes after they were gained. Eustace was a stranger, and of an unwelcome class, and they were glad to see him humbled by the scout. Robert was visited with some of the spite which Laura had occasioned in accepting the ephemeral sovereignty from such a source. And hardly a genuine shout rewarded the announcement, that Robert Magruder was King of the Foresters and would lead the ball at night with Laura, the Queen of Beauty.

The company began dispersing to prepare for dinner. Old Magruder with Eustace and Robert were crossing the green to reach the veranda, when a number of bags came rolling toward them. Laura was behind with Bessie and Cecil, but she recognized a woolly head protruding from one of the sacks, and came forward to prevent the old Scotchman from discovering the victor in the sack race. She was, however, too late.

"Dook!" cried old Magruder, looking down at the bag which led the advance, "What the deil did ye crawl into that sack for? Say, ye atomy!"

The bag rolled slowly over, a big round black head protruding showed its white eyes and spaddle teeth, and a grating voice replied: "Dar covyer de greeze pots. Dat's sense! Haw! haw! haw! Yar telled me to covyer the greeze pots."

"Come, father," said Laura, and hurried the old man onward. The rest followed, and after a sharp walk, they were shortly upon the veranda. Old Magruder was still inclined to fume about Cole's antics, and as soon as he had recovered his breath, began: "Ye are too froward, Laurie! Why did ye na let me rate the boy?"

"Why father—" began the lady; but Cecil, who had no confidence in the efficacy of her explanation with the old man, came forward leading by the arm old Griggles.

"Mr Magruder," said he, "this is General Griggles, our counselor at the capital, who has come to enjoy the sports."

The old Scotchman bowed; and the gentlemen engaged in conversation. Cigars were brought, and they sat smoking and talking of the games. Meantime the ladies retired to rest and to adorn their loveliness for the dining hour.

When the goodly company were assembled in the long low-ceiled dining-room, adorned with the antlers of many a slain stag, General McMack—they called him old Mack and sometimes little

Mack—presided over the sumptuous cheer and the corps of ebony waiters. Peace to thine ashes, old Mack! Well do I remember thee, with thy white hair and ruddy face and genial smile, singing out thy bill of fare. Never, oh! never, little Mack, shall we see thine equal again.

"Turtle soup, made of the finest terrapin," cried the little gray-head, bustling around the room. "Oysters from the Gulf—crabs from Pascagoula, singing the lost tribes' song—Mississippi mountain trout—"

"My dear young ladies, take these seats," he said *sotto voce* to Laura and Bessie as they entered the room; "now what will you have?"

"We of the auncion regame," said Mrs. Frogg, waddling up and appropriating a seat by the girls, "always take trout. 'Tis sweet to see the fish cut with its golden oar the silver stream!'"

"Jerry, you black rascal!" said the little man to a waiter, "get the lady a catfish; and bring some soup to these young folks—Southdown mutton and beef from down South!" he said as he bustled away, smiling and nodding to this one and that.

The scout, meeting Doc in the vestibule, as he entered the room, cried, "Out of my way, Magruder!" and kicked the dwarf. At this moment old Griggles appeared, and together the two

men entered the dining hall, regardless of Cole's frantic grimaces behind their backs.

"Ah! General Griggles and Captain Bludger, what can I do to serve you?" asked old Mack, approaching these gentlemen; "some fine old claret has just arrived and some of the very best Bourbon—"

"Send me the claret," said Griggles.

"Bourbon for me!" cried the scout, seating himself noisily.

"Billy," said little Mack, "bring the General some of the fresh claret, and give the other man a bottle of rye whiskey."

"Turkey, fine turkey," sang old Mack as he went smiling off to new guests; "fat turkey—all the best in the world."

"Ah, Mr. Magruder," he said, approaching the girls again, and leaning over the old Scotchman's chair, "the beef is really fine, sir, and the turkey, and you will not find the oysters bad—Andrew, here, you imp of darkness! Attend exclusively on this party—Mr. Robert, his companion, and these three—dyer hear!"

"Venison from the forest—fresh and fine—all the best in the world!" and away went little grayhead again, singing the praises of what he had and much which he did not have. Oh! genial old

Mack, how many a dinner owed its success to thy songs of praise!

"Health to our sovereigns!" said General Griggles, in his cast-iron manner, raising a glass of wine. Servants at his command had filled wine-glasses before all of our friends. Robert and Laura bowed and smiled and tasted the General's offering. Eustace bowed and drank, and old Magruder was on the point of speaking, when Madam Frogg broke in: "Yes, General Griggles, long life and happiness to our king and queen, and 'confusion to our enemies,' as the poets say. Some folks make talk that one family shouldn't have all the honors; but Froggie said 'A man can't have too much of a good thing'—didn't you, darling?"

Froggie darling fixed his steady eye on Griggles, and his other optic wandered over the guests; then swallowing his chin and opening his mouth, he prepared to speak. But what he intended to say never appeared, for the scout cried, looking fiercely at the king: "I'm a mastodon!"

Bludger, sitting among his admiring companions, of whom the soft-speaking young man who complimented the "puty guls" was a leader, had been detailing his war exploits to their chorus of applause. The rye whiskey had mounted to his head, and his bleared eyes and coarse features made him look now, with his hair tumbled over

his eyes, like a wild animal. None of this clique had raised their glasses at Griggles' toast, and the scout, half tipsy, sat glowering over the wine-glass, and exclaiming: "I'm a mastodon! Too much Magruder here, by George. I'm a whale!"

Young Magruder calmly placed upon the table the wine-glass from which he was drinking, and rose from his chair in the manly beauty of a young Apollo. "Captain Bludger will understand," he said, catching and riveting the scout's eye, "that I am no mollusk." With a slight but significant nod to the coterie, the king sat down, and immediately the scout and his companions noisily pushed back their chairs and left the table.

When they reached the door, Cole was in the vestibule, holding Bludger's little darky by the hair, and kicking him soundly, as the boy cried: "I didn't mean nuffin; Miss Gruder is bery good queen—she is!"

"Here you, tar babie!" said the scout, with drunken gravity, catching Doc by the wool in turn, "Say! hic—ain't you the nigger—hic—I kicked as I went in?—hic—and you—hic—are here kicking a man yourself!"

The dwarf extricated his round head and, grinning back at the scout, as he shuffled away, exclaimed: "Pshaw! Cap, we gen'l'm'n knows who to kick! Dat's sense! Haw! haw! haw!"

The sun was just setting as the company came out upon the veranda. Dinner was over, the diners gone, and the hall was cleared for the closing masque.

Night threw down her mantle. Lights soon flashed from the windows. Music then began and figures strange appeared. A queen, wearing a crown of flowers, walked across the floor. Bayard went before the queen, and Arthur kissed her hand. The king made his entrance, to an old minuet tune. This monarch greeted a flower-girl who had sweet Bessie's hair, and a gypsy maid told fortunes, with a green devil's aid. The queen now danced with Launcelot, the king with the flower-girl, and the devil played the devil to the gypsy maid's delight.

Under the starry canopy without walked the knight and the flower-crowned queen. "Laura, my darling, my beautiful one," murmured Sir Launcelot's voice; and the soft sigh of the flower-crowned queen was the only answer made.

Out in the moonlight under the shadows, the king walked with the gypsy maid, and talked to her of love; and the devil followed them, wagging his tail, and quietly said: "Dat's sense!"

Oh! 'twas a merry masque, a long-remembered scene.

CHAPTER VIII.

"Worthies, away! The scene begins to cloud."
Love's Labor's Lost.

NEXT morning presented a busy scene. Guests were standing on the veranda and in the green before the hotel, bidding adieu to one another. Carriages, spring-wagons and buggies were in the gravelled way. Here porters strapped big trunks in the boot of an old-fashioned coach. There a smartly dressed serving-man put a new gladstone into a light gig. Most of the company had departed, and Robert was alone upon the veranda when Cecil appeared. In his calm, graceful manner he advanced toward the young man and, after some remark about the variable weather, said: "Robert, I think Laura commits an error in submitting to this young fellow's addresses."

"You refer to Eustace?" asked young Magruder.

"Yes," answered Cecil, taking Robert's arm as they promenaded the veranda, "your father's mental condition induced me to mention to you what ordinarily should have been reserved for his

ear. Eustace is an adventurer, and of an unpopular class."

"Since when, Colonel Cecil," asked the young man, gravely, "did you discover the Magruders trimming their sails to the popular breeze? But why do you think that Laura is partial to the gentleman?"

"Last night I observed them," answered Cecil ignoring the first question, "and I also heard these people's remarks."

"What remarks?" cried Magruder, so sharply, that Cecil almost started. "Who has dared to couple my sister's name—"

"Oh! The whole company, for that matter," replied the iron-gray gentleman, with some impatience of manner. "But this is of slight importance. If she drops his intimate acquaintance now, the talk will cease."

"But why should she slight the gentleman?" asked Robert.

Cecil stopped and deliberately surveyed his companion. "The man," he said, "is a carpet-bag adventurer."

Robert stood in silent thought awhile, and then saying, "I will think of your words," abruptly left his companion.

The subject of this conversation was helping old Magruder and his daughter into the carriage, and

half-abstractedly glancing at the western sky. When Bessie's turn came, she declined his assistance by brushing past him and getting in without aid. As the bays, driven in Doctor Cole's finest style, drew the carriage rapidly over the gravel, Miss Cecil put her head out of the window, and cried to Eustace, who was gazing at the southern horizon, "Don't wish us a ducking, sir!" and then sinking back on the seat she exclaimed, "Oh! that man!"

Laura looked up, but made no reply; and Bessie, growing more impatient, cried, with a toss of her head: "You love him, young lady!"

Miss Magruder blushed. "And if I do," she asked, "what then?"

"Oh, Laura!" cried Miss Cecil, "not him—any one rather than him!"

"What do you mean?" asked Laura, half-indignantly, but with a vague alarm.

"Your life, my dear, will be wretched," cried Bessie; "you will ever hold an inferior position; and soon you will learn to hate the man!"

"Why, Bessie!" exclaimed Miss Magruder, "what has he done?"

"Can you not see?" asked her companion; "he submits to every indignity. Oh! Laura, he has no spirit!"

No answer was made to this charge. Alternate

sunshine and showers made the April-like morning, but now the changing lights deepened, and Laura looked out the window. A sombre cloud hung on the western horizon. Southward was heard low rumbling, like continuous thunder. Old Magruder sat opposite the girls, writing on his tablets. And they rode on in silence.

"Laura, my darling," murmured Miss Cecil, putting her head upon the shoulder of her friend, "you know I love you."

Laura shrank away. The lights now deepened to a gray dawn, changing to twilight, and the old man looked up from his abstraction.

"Why, girls," he said, "I canna' see!"

The negro was now heard urging on the horses. Oppressive anxiety seized the inmates of the vehicle. A crash of thunder broke over them, and, the carriage, which Doc was driving furiously, stopped with a jolt.

"What noo, Dook?" asked Magruder, looking out.

"Dey won't go no furder!" whimpered the negro.

Opening the door, the old man stepped to the ground. The mares were cowering at a bridge, which they refused to cross. And no wonder! The sky now wore a greenish tinge. Black masses were rising in the south-west like smoke from

a steamer's chimneys. The rumbling had increased; and park after park of artillery seemed discharging in the sky.

"Girls," cried the old man, bewildered, "an awful thing is goin' to hap!"

"Vedu gwine ter fling loose Powderee!" whispered the dwarf's coarse voice, and his face looked gray with fright in the deepening gloom.

Rapid hoof-strokes of a running horse were heard, and Eustace galloping to the carriage, leaped from the saddle and threw the door open.

"Get out!" he said, peremptorily. "Mr. Magruder take the ladies down yonder path," pointing to one cut in the high bank and extending to the dry bed of the creek. "Doc, cut the traces!" and, opening his pocket knife, the young man in less time than we have told of it loosed the mares.

"Lead the horses after the ladies!" he said, and followed with his own hack.

The scene was now terrific. Up in the green sky appeared a huge mass like a vast elephant's trunk. Twisting, writhing, seething, it was now like molten copper, now black as ink. A network of forked lightning played within the cloud, and a hollow roar resounded like many trains crossing long trestle-works. The monster in the air grew larger. Feeling upon the earth, anon it lifted its black funnel and cast it down in another place. Roaring,

tossing, on, on it came with a noise like rending forests. Boughs, limbs, trees flew by. The crumpled carriage went over as if discharged from a mortar. Armies of fiends seemed howling in the sky. Awe settled on the group! "Down on the ground!" cried Eustace. The air shimmered with lightning; and past shot the powderee with a demoniac yell of triumph!

The storm-god's chariot went rumbling off in the east, and Eustace, pointing to a brilliant rainbow which rose and bent upon the cloud, said reverently: "Like a Saviour bending in mercy o'er the ruin wrought by sin."

Seeing that his charge was safe, the young man led them from the creek; Doc, whose eyes were like saucers, looked at the vacancy, and cried "Whar de caige?" Bessie laughed at this, but Laura was silent.

The path of the tornado through the forest was like some vast railroad cut. Every tree was down for a breadth of five hundred yards, and as far in length as the eye could reach. They were thrown in every direction, uprooted, broken, splintered and twisted in all conceivable ways.

At once the ladies and the old man were mounted on the horses. Eustace and Doc searched out and prepared the way. But, in spite of all their efforts, so many were the obstructions,

that night had settled down when they found themselves at the edge of the storm track.

None of them knew the road into which they emerged. Magruder's lack of memory incapacitated him. Doc had not recovered from his fright. The girls were by this time in a state of mental chaos. Eustace, therefore, led his followers at a venture towards a light which he observed about a mile up the road.

When they reached the gate, the young man cried, "Hello!" A voice responded, "Light, and come in!" and chairs were heard moving upon the gallery. Some one came towards them with a candle.

"Here they are," cried Alex Norman's hearty voice; "all safe and sound!" and he deliberately held up the candle and inspected them. "Now," he laughed, "get down and let me see if you can walk."

"Mr. Eustace," said Robert, coldly approaching that gentleman, who was helping Laura from the saddle, "I am indebted to you for leading my sister into such danger."

"Oh! brother," cried Laura, "he saved all our lives!"

"Ha! Quite a storm king," sneered Bludger, who now approached. "But there would have been more sense in taking the Northern road.

By St. George, it is easy to escape a trap of one's own setting!"

"Welcome to my home, Mr. Eustace," said Norman, "and all now follow me." So saying, the kindly giant led the way, with his candle, to the interior of a log room, where a little, slender, blonde lady rose to meet them.

"My wife," said the giant. "Jennie, let's have supper."

Slender little Jennie bowed to the guests, and, turning to a blond boy of ten, said, "Napoleon Bonaparte, go up stairs, and get some meal and, meat."

"Marie Antoinette," cried the boy to a girl of twelve, "boost me up the loom!" and the brunette girl, putting her head to Napoleon's seat of honor, proceeded to shove him into the loft by way of the machine he named, for stairs there were none.

"Julius Cæsar," cried little Jennie, a moment after, as she began making batter for the cakes, "get some water."

"Lu Creture Bored Ear," cried the brunette urchin, to a meek little blonde maid of seven, "come with me to well—I'se keered!" And hand in hand, away toddled Lucretia Borgia and the Roman.

A savory supper, was soon prepared, and more

heartily enjoyed by little Jennie's guests than any meal they ate at the Well. Soon the two young ladies were sleeping in the only bed in the log chamber, while the giant and his family reposed on the table in the other apartment, and the male visitors slept upon the gallery.

When after a hearty breakfast next morning, Norman led them through his fields, and bade them a hearty god-speed, they felt what a perfect gentleman was their host. And well they might, for he, with thousands of others, after giving youth and fortune to a lost cause, returned home to face a life of honest poverty with the same gallant, generous heart that made him the hero of a war.

CHAPTER IX.

"Lo, the poor Indian!"

Essay on Man.

THROUGH the russet and gold of the autumn forest the scout, Robert and Eustace, with Bessie and Laura, were riding rapidly one frosty morn shortly after the events last described. This was Miss Magruder's excursion. Possessing an intuitive knowledge of human nature, without the experience essential to sagacity, she fancied, poor girl, that, since these persons were naturally not inimical, she could by bringing them together destroy their prejudices and create in them mutual regard.

An old mound, like those to be found in many parts of this country, was the object of their journey. Laura, like a good general, had provided a lunch, and sent a servant to leave it under the chestnut trees. And an hour's ride carried her excursionists to the spot—a grand old grove.

Oak trees of enormous growth stretched out their sturdy limbs and interlaced their boughs in

a canopy over the Bermuda carpeting. No undergrowth was here, and the horses galloped freely over the crisp, frost-touched grass. In the centre of this wood appeared a clearing, and in this stood the mound. It was rectangular, about forty feet high, and on each corner of its summit, which was a plain sixty by a hundred feet, grew a branching chestnut tree.

"Oh, I am so sorry!" exclaimed Laura, looking up at the trees; "there are no nuts."

"Never mind, little sister," laughed Robert, "these trees never bear, but yonder by the creek we shall find an abundance." Dismounting and taking some lines from his coat pocket, he added: "I am for fishing, ladies and gentlemen! Who will help me Waltonize?"

No one answered, and the young man walked off alone some three hundred yards to the water. Laura and Bessie, when assisted from their horses, strayed into a coppice; and Eustace was left at the mound with the scout. After they secured the animals, Bludger walked up the embankment, and sat under one of the chestnut trees. Eustace remained below, attracted by objects on the ground, and presently he picked up one.

"What is this?" he asked, holding a diamond-shaped piece of rock. "It looks like an arrow-head."

"And such it is," said the scout. "Your perception is stupendous! Next you will discover that this hillock resembles an Indian mound."

"You think this a battle monument?" asked Eustace, carelessly.

"It was hardly built for amusement, I suppose," said the scout.

"May be it was," answered the other. "Devoted followers of Epicurus are as likely to have erected this for pleasure as the astrological kings of Egypt the pyramids for horoscopes. But after all," he added, glancing rapidly over the scene, "it is not a bad battle-ground. Yonder creek, with its steep banks, and deep water, could be held against a superior attacking force."

"Pshaw!" said Bludger, "Indians are no more philosophers than negroes or baboons."

"Why may not men of either color have the same culture as if they were white?" asked Eustace.

"Because they are savages," said the scout. "Their education is merely a polish which rubs off with the first touch of excitement and leaves the barbarous nature unadorned. No race but the Caucasian is capable of acquiring real culture. Ignorance or disregard of this truth has led to the enfranchisement of the negro; and if we submitted would soon cause the destruction of our liberties."

"What can you do but submit?" asked Eustace.

"If you nullify the law, you weaken the government, and corrupt the people, and may pave the way for an empire."

"Let the old rattletrap weaken!" cried the scout. "By George, I should like to see an empire!"

"Live long, let public corruption increase," said Eustace, "and you doubtless will! I am not wholly averse from the change. 'A state,' said Plato, 'will be delivered from its calamities when power is united in one person, with wisdom and justice.' Rome was greater under her Cæsars than when torn by the factions of Marius and Sylla. But for our Republic I hope a better destiny. How young and vigorous is the nation, and how splendid its possibilities! Already in its infancy the country has near completion a monument higher than the pyramids, a bridge surpassing the Roman aqueduct, a capitol grander than Versailles. Its moral force is tremendous. The influence of the American Republic to-day is greater than Rome possessed. It is the bulwark of the liberty of mankind. Ever has the South stood as the champion of the constitution upon which the grand structure stands; never has she faltered in avowing her principles—right or wrong! Rather let her perish as the defender—pure and fearless—of constitutional liberty, than live the handmaid of despotic power!"

"Bravo!" cried the scout, clapping his hands, and laughing. "By St. George, you're a Cicero!" But he was pleased with the picture drawn by Eustace, and would have made a kindlier answer, had not a scream from the coppice stopped him.

The interruption occurred in this manner. When the girls reached the undergrowth, they sat under a chestnut tree and began opening the burrs. A few minutes had been thus consumed, when Laura, looking toward the mound said, half dreamily, "One almost sees the red warriors fighting yonder, Bessie! Perhaps where we sit, an Indian maiden looked through this lattice-work of vines watching the struggle, and awaiting a lover's return."

Looking toward her companion Bessie saw a dry limb of an oak and struck it with a stick. Like magic it was transformed! It coiled like a ship's cable, its fanged head and glittering eyes reared as if to strike, and over the sounds of the forest rang its sharp, warning rattle! Laura, unconscious of her danger, would inevitably have been struck, for Bessie was unable to move or speak. But at this instant a girl, clad in hunting dress, with long wavy, chestnut hair hanging over her shoulders, stepped fearlessly between Laura and the serpent. Her great changeful eyes were fixed upon the glittering head above the coil, which slowly unwound, and the rattlesnake moved softly into the woods.

Bessie's tongue was now untied, and she screamed.

Laura looked around just in time to see her fair preserver disappearing in the undergrowth. She was about to ask Bessie what it all meant, when the three gentlemen came running to the scene.

"Why, what's the matter, sister?" cried Robert. "I thought an Indian chief had captured you."

"His daughter did appear!" said Bessie. "Ha! ha! ha!"

"Sorry she didn't stop to lunch," said Robert. "I have some splendid fish, and here comes Cole with the wagon."

The Doctor's big, unshapely head appeared now in the undergrowth, and in a short time he had prepared the fish, the lunch was eaten, and our excursionists were ready to depart.

"You are melancholy," said Robert, as they rode home in the wagon, to Bessie, who had been unusually silent since the scene in the coppice. "That laugh seems to have exhausted your supply of merriment."

"Such a singular thing occurred!" answered the young lady, seriously. "Who can that woman be?"

"The Indian girl?" asked Robert.

"Why, the country is full of wandering Choctaws

and Chickasaws," said the scout. "We have a county named after one of the chiefs."

"One Red Man, at least," said Eustace, smiling, "must have been esteemed by the whites."

"Yes," answered Robert. "Leflore was a personage of great wealth and influence. He was a man of decided character."

Eustace smiled, and bowed to Bludger, who answered, "The exception only proves the rule."

Thoughtfully looking back at Doc, who was driving before him after the wagon four saddle-horses, Eustace remarked: "Some things these men of color can do better than their colorless brothers. Possibly a new territory like that given to the kindred of Leflore is the solution of the race-conflict."

"White is a combination of all colors," said Robert, laughing. "With this other shades are easily combined. It occur to me that we should absorb the various hues and produce a people adapted to the country and climate."

Pretty Bessie Cecil tossed her head and blushingly exclaimed, "Shameful, Colonel Magruder! If we are to be entertained by such insulting remarks, Laura and I will walk." And she put her jewelled hand upon the side of the wagon as if to get out.

"Sweet creature, desist!" cried Robert, laughing still, and throwing his arm before the young lady. "Risk not thy precious life. Who knows but the

gentle savage is pursuing us—awaiting in ambush to capture stragglers?"

Bessie leaned back on her seat, prettily pouting, with a reproachful glance at Magruder, and was silent. Laura looked inquiringly at Eustace; and this gentleman, feeling that his views were expected, remarked: "The negro question is beset with difficulties. Doubtless the two races can work out a future if they will cordially unite. But I have been thinking that no such union will occur."

"And if it should," cried the scout, who was driving, "the future when attained would astound the world. By St. George! a mixture of mean whites and lazy mulattoes would result in all the vices of which humanity is heir."

"Positively, I will stand this no longer!" cried Bessie; and laughing and shaking her finger at Robert, she said, "Tell me a bear-story, sir, I command you!"

"Once upon a time," said Magruder, with mock solemnity, "there was a gentle savage—"

"Oh, hush!" cried Bessie, pouting and tossing her pretty head; "I will not have that."

The story, with many interruptions, however, proceeded. Other narrations followed. And at nightfall the excursionists were in the midst of an exciting tale of the sea by Eustace, when the wagon stopped before Magruder's gate.

CHAPTER X.

"Gods, what a stew! A cannibal crew
Eating their midnight barbecue."
The Cannibal Banquet.

A PILE of oak logs blazed in the wide chimney of old Magruder's parlor. The brazen fire-dogs shone in the glare. Quaint shadows were cast by the high-backed chairs and old-fashioned furniture. Like children telling ghost-stories, Laura sat with Eustace and Robert near the brass fender, listening to Bessie's account of the serpent-charmer. When she finished with a description of the girl's beauty, Eustace narrated a tale of a haunted house. The conversation drifted into stories of horrors; and Robert told of an old German who, coming into the swamp with his family, settled at an unfrequented spot on the Yazoo—the River of Death; how the river rose and covered the country, and for weeks no person could reach the old man's place; and how at last, when the waters subsided, they found nothing of the German's cabin but a heap of ashes and charred human bones.

"Over the site of the Dutchman's cot," laughed

Robert, looking into Bessie's wide-stretched eyes, "I am going to ride to-night, and I will tell you if I encounter his spectre. Doc, is my horse ready? —Why, baboon!" he cried, looking at the dwarf, who stood trembling before him with open mouth and staring eyes, "what ails the fool? Have you seen the Dutchman's ghost?"

"Brother," said Laura, following the young man out on the gallery and putting her arm around him, "do not go to-night."

"You little goose," said Robert, "so you are scared too! How you tremble! Had I not engaged to meet Bludger at daylight to arrange the election, I should remain, little sister. But it will never do to tell the scout that I was scared off by a goblin-story. Good-by!" And kissing Laura, he walked rapidly to the gate, mounted, and rode away in the darkness.

It was now eleven o'clock, and a drizzling night, but a full moon gave some light through the thin veil of clouds. There were two ways to reach the rendezvous. One around the lake by the main causeway was safe and open, but twelve miles long. Another led over a bridle-path through the densest part of the swamp, where a single misstep would plunge horse and rider into marshes or quicksands, from which extrication was impossible. This path crossed a dangerous lagoon close

by the River of Death, and here was the site of the old German's horror.

Doubtful whether the river was low enough to enable him to ford the Rolling Fork of the Yazoo,—as this place was named, from the unusual power of its current in high water,—the young man rode slowly along the causeway, debating in his mind which route to pursue, until he reached the entrance to the path. He was about to take the longer road, when a hand grasped his bridle, and the dwarf's harsh voice whispered, "Go roun' lake. No take path. Dat's sense!"

"Loose my bridle-rein, you rascal!" cried the young man. "What do you mean, sir, by following me?"

"No take path," said the negro, whose misshapen form now loomed darkly at the entrance to the bridle-way. "Vedu in Rollin' Fork. See Vedu—Vedu kill!"

"Out of my way, or I'll ride you down!" cried the young man, urging his horse toward the negro.

The dwarf leaped aside, and the horse galloped into the bridle-path. A few steps carried him under the dense foliage which shut out the feeble moonlight, and Robert, unable to distinguish an object, dropped the reins and trusted wholly to the animal's sagacity. The horse fell into a rapid walk, and the young man had ample time to

repent his rashness in suffering a foolish negro to get him into such difficulty. Meantime the dwarf put his ear to the ground, and distinguishing the slower pace of the animal, rose and, croaking, "Haw! haw! haw! Dat's sense!" set off in his ambling shuffle after the rider.

A dark ride of an hour was enlivened only by the croak of swamp-frogs, the deep bellowings of water-animals, and the occasional lazy splash of an alligator near the path. Rushing water was then heard, and presently the roar of the Rolling Fork. Spurring forward his horse, the young man entered the little clearing. There close by the Dangerous Crossing stood the Teuton's dwelling, rebuilt. Red light streamed through the cracks between the logs. Low chanting and a steady tramp were heard, as if the old German's family were celebrating their return to life.

A feeling akin to awe came over young Magruder. The horse stopped, trembling with fear, and refused to approach the apparition. It was contrary to the traditions of the young man's caste, however, to turn from any danger, and, although with an effort, he shook off the feeling of oppression. Dismounting, he took hold of the bridle-rein and approached the hut. He crouched down and looked through a crack, and this spectacle appeared:

The interior of the log-cabin was lit up with the red glare of a heap of pine knots that blazed upon a hearth of mud, and the black smoke, having no escape, hung around the poles which served as rafters to a brush roof. On a pile of green boughs, in the centre, sat a woman robed in a bear's skin, with the stuffed figure of a wild-cat on her head. Her long, wavy hair fell over fair shoulders, but her face was turned from the observer. Around this creature circled a number of blacks stripped to the waist. In front tramped one, taller by a foot than the others, whose grizzled wool, Moorish head, and commanding air attracted Robert. He turned and showed the hard features of the Congo chief, Wild Rock. They moved in regular tread about the leafy throne, now bowing to the woman, now wildly tossing their arms on high, and chanting as they marched :

"Voodoo, Marie, Voodoo, Ban !
Rid our race of straight-hair man.
By the cat that climbs the tree,
By the bear that robs the bee,
By the eagle bold and free,
By the snake that follows thee,
Voodoo, Marie, Voodoo, Ban !
Voodoo, death to white-face man."

Robert gazed at this scene in wonder. Hesitat-

ing a moment, he considered what course he should pursue.

An ominous cry, like a screech-owl, quavered in the woods. The horse started, and its hoof snapped a dry stick. Instantly the hovel was dark. Hitching his steed to a swinging limb, the young man called. No answer. Search revealed an open door, and he entered the hut. The darkness was palpable. He felt round the floor, but found nothing. Then going to the hearth, he began raking among the ashes for a light ; but they were wet, and after a fruitless effort to rekindle the dead embers, the young man resumed his journey. Moonlight had broken through the clouds. The crossing was made in safety; and about two o'clock he reached the rendezvous—a small double cottage owned by Bludger and sometimes used as a schoolhouse.

The scout stood in the door, holding his horse; and as Robert approached, he cried, "Ha! By George! Magruder, I had given you up and was about going alone."

"Going where?" asked the arrival. "You have not yet informed me what we are undertaking."

"Oh! we are off for the county town," said the scout, "and as we ride I will tell you all about the matter."

Together they started on a path, and soon

turned into a causeway similar to that near old Magruder's house. In fact these roads branched from the county town in all directions through the swamp, and Robert's ride had been merely from one to another across the marsh. The base of a triangle whose apex was the town represented the young man's course during the night; and the riders were as near the seat of justice now as was Magruder's residence.

CHAPTER XI.

"Diseases desperate grown
By desperate appliance are relieved,
Or not at all."—*Hamlet.*

ELABORATE was the original plan of the county town. A large square was reserved for the marble halls of Justice, and from this centre branched ten broad avenues whose appellations were to be given by victories which the armies of the commonwealth were expected to achieve. Streets intersected each other at right angles—those running east and west to be entitled after the counties of the State, and the others after the States of the Union. Doubt was expressed among the projectors whether the latter thoroughfares would exceed the names, or the nation keep pace with the metropolis. But their anxiety was dispelled by the event. Long before a score of fields had furnished appellations for the avenues, they had all become country causeways, except one, which, under the name of the Big Road, connected a square brick courthouse with the landing on the river. This street

was lined with one- and two-story frame dwelling-houses, and made a handle to the bowl of the court square, which caused strangers to compare the city to a soup-ladle. A number of long one-story frame stores faced on each side of the grassy square. In front of one of these was suspended a painted tin with the inscription, "Wiley Eustace, Attorney at Law;" and the ensign, "Daniel Bludger, Law Office," hung in proud rivalry on the other side of the green.

Half-way between the river and the square a house faced the Big Road. This resembled all the others; but as the gentle reader may never have seen one of these edifices, it deserves a passing notice. It stood in a yard covered by forest-trees. Leaning against each gable-end outside the building was a large brick chimney. The single-story weather-boarded structure presented to the street a gallery adorned with six square posts, and over this the great flat side of the roof extended like the broad brim of a low-crowned hat which commonly shaded the sunburned features of the natives in this region.

On most of the causeways, during the night mentioned in the last chapter, muffled equestrians might have been seen converging toward the town. These riders, singly or in pairs approaching the house described, entered a side gate, and,

leaving their horses in a stable behind the building, went in at a back door.

This house had a room eighteen by twenty feet in dimensions, with low walls ceiled with curly pine. In the centre of the bare floor stood a table covered with a red cloth, supporting a large lamp, some boxes of cigars, several decanters and glasses. A log fire burned in the wide chimney-place. Split-bottom hickory chairs were ranged against the walls, and over them was a line of hooks for the hats and overcoats of visitors. When the horsemen came into the light and hung up their wraps, they disclosed the grizzled features of the men of the mystic sign.

Including Cecil there were nine of these men. A bold and commanding manner was common to all, and proclaimed each a leader in his sphere.

Evidently they expected something, and delayed opening their business. Standing in groups about the room, with the filled glasses in their hands, they conversed in low tones, or sat smoking near the fire. Gradually the conversation drifted into anecdote and stories of their youthful frolics hardly consistent with the silver which mingled among the natural shades of their hair. A grizzled man, whose haughty eye and curving lip gave dignity to a face marked by debauchery, was telling

one of his escapades, and at its unique *dénouement* the men broke into hilarity.

"Ha! ha! ha!" laughed the iron-gray men; and then checking themselves they gazed curiously at one another. At this moment the door swung open and Bludger, with young Magruder, entered the room. They looked at the scout inquiringly.

"All right!" answered Bludger.

"Ah!" cried Cecil, with a start of surprise, "surely, no!" The remainder of the men only said, "Then we certainly win!"

"By St. George!" cried the scout, laughing coarsely, "we always win. Now, gentlemen, health to the enterprise." He raised a goblet and bowed, and the company drained their glasses.

The tawny whiskers and handsome, bold blue eyes of Robert Magruder gave him the aspect of a fine young Englishman. But an appearance of indecision overspread his face during this scene, which upon the firm lines of his manly mouth caused an expression almost ludicrous.

Of all the company, none but Cecil observed this evidence of the young man's feeling. The others, regarding their scheme as perfected, dropped the subject; and some one suggested a game.

Cards were produced. Fast and furious grew the fun; and the streak of early dawn found them

at their carousal. Hardly had light appeared, when a black boy knocked at the door and called them to breakfast. After this meal they strolled in couples up the street and separated in the town.

The men into whose secret conclave we have entered represented half the chief white families in a vast population of negroes. Surrounded by this sea of Africans who were lately slaves and might now remember the injuries which they suffered, the sparse Caucasian element felt like the followers of Clive or Hastings in the midst of the hordes of India.

The negroes, having a power thrust upon them which they had not sought and whose uses they did not comprehend, were inclined to aggression, without as yet a definite object. But the example of St. Domingo was ever present with the white people; and a few Congos and Ashantees who had not outlived their native savageness or the superstitions of their race gave a fierce reality to apprehensions which germinated in a perturbed society like weeds in alluvial earth.

In short, there existed in this country at the time of which we write an apparently irreconcilable conflict of races. With the Caucasians it was a question, as they argued, of self-preservation; and if their methods were often lawless and sometimes

cruel, this was the inevitable result of the doctrine which they sincerely believed, that they were the superior race, the owners of the soil, and therefore entitled, and in duty bound, to direct the government.

CHAPTER XII.

"A weapon that comes down as still
As snow-flakes fall upon the sod,
But executes a freeman's will
As lightning does the will of God;
And from its force nor doors nor locks
Can shield you: 'tis the ballot-box."

A Word from a Petitioner.

SABBATH stillness reigned in the town. Stores were closed, the streets deserted. The occasional tread of a white pedestrian could be heard on the plank sidewalks which served for pavements, and now and then a company of negroes rode through the streets on mules. Shotguns were seen in the hands of some of the blacks. A white man here and there displayed the more dangerous revolver. All were moving toward an old school-house, which sat under an elm-tree in a field beyond Court Square.

Eustace was sitting in the door of the front room of his office, reading a volume, when Cecil approached with his calm gracefulness.

"Well, sir student," said the latter, "what do the books reveal?"

"There had not yet come in," read Eustace

from the open volume, "that disregard of the oath which now marks the age, nor had men yet learned to force laws and institutions into an accommodation to their selfish ends, instead of adapting their own manners and conduct to the higher aims of government."

"Let me see your radical crank," said Cecil, taking the book. "Livy! Of what was the Roman writing?"

"The purer days of the Republic," answered Eustace, carelessly.

Percy Cecil looked at him keenly. "What do you know?" he asked.

"I do not understand you," said Eustace, looking up surprised.

"Ha! ha! ha!" laughed the iron-gray gentleman, and throwing the book on a table, he said, "Come, let us vote."

Eustace arose, and together they strolled up to the balloting-place.

The school-house was closed except the front door. This entrance had three tables arranged on the sides of a square, so that the voter found himself, when he stepped into the house, enclosed in a kind of court or vestibule. On the tables were placed the poll-books and the tin box to receive the tickets. The inspectors and clerks sat behind. Daniel Bludger and two colored citizens governed

the election. One of the latter was fat and pompous, and his knowledge consisted of a few scraps of statutory language which he had absorbed while justice of the peace. The other was lean and weak, and his accomplishments in figures had recommended him to his race for this position; but as his experience in counting was limited to the enumeration of watermelons in his patch, he had never gone beyond a score, and whenever he reached "twarnty," as he styled the numeral, he invariably began over again. The fat citizen was expected by the black people to see that the election was legally conducted, and the lean citizen that the count of the votes was fair.

Outside the scene was enlivening; and as the day wore on the excitement became intense. White canvassers tried to mingle among the negroes, but the latter came up in companies, cast their votes and retired. A score of black men lingered in groups about the school-house, and here and there stood a few whites. Now and then one of the latter would advance and drop a white ticket into the box, but a constant stream of green ballots had been poured in for hours by the colored voters. The white men felt that they were being crushed by numbers in this contest, which was rather a battle than an election, and they longed to change the nature of the conflict so that their

points of superiority would tell. At last the polls were closed.

"Now," said the fat citizen, "we recedes to de count."

"Let de numeration be numerated," said his lean colleague.

"I am hungry, men," said the scout, "and I move we adjourn to dinner. We can lock the door and be back in an hour."

"De statu say 'den an' dar,'" objected the fat ex-justice. "De count must recede den an' dar!"

"When and whar?" asked Bludger. "However, if you don't want any dinner, I am content. We can finish by morning. Open the box."

"Pause! brudderin, pause!" cried the lean man. "Wid me the flesh am weak, and I 'poses ter 'spend de numeration til arter cretur cumfuts."

"Majority rules!" cried Bludger, and rising he left the box, and moved toward the door. The lean citizen followed. But the fat man said, "Hold, gentlemen, let's have a guard."

The scout agreed to this. With great pomposity the fat citizen approached the door, and cried, "Possee commitatis ter guard de box!" And a hundred negroes standing around began crowding to the house.

"Have twarnty," suggested the lean man.

Twenty black men, armed with bludgeons and

guns, accordingly stood by the locked door while the inspectors and clerks went to dinner.

Night had set in before they returned, and when Bludger opened the door the crowd rushed into the house. It was dark. "Bring a light!" cried the scout; and some one produced a candle and matches. Bludger struck a light, and, looking up, said, "Ah! Magruder, thank you. You are too late to vote, I fear;" and he turned inquiringly to his associates.

"De polls am closed," said the fat man.

"De numeration must percede," said the lean citizen.

Bludger yielded the point, and they began to count the votes. Tickets of each color were, when counted, strung on a separate wire; and the white eyes in the circle of black faces watching the strings grew whiter, and their jaws fell lower and lower, as the snowy cord stretched down toward the floor, while the other was hardly tipped with green.

Presently the scout announced that the white had carried the day; and turning to the ex-justice, he asked if the laws had been complied with.

"De 'lection," said the fat citizen, dolefully, "is in 'pliance wid de statu."

"Say, you numeration-man," cried a young negro, fiercely, to the lean worthy, "how many green tickets war put in de box?"

The lean citizen looked up helplessly and ejaculated, "Twarnty!"

"Haw! haw! haw!" croaked a grating laugh in a dark corner of the room. "Vedu had dat box. Dat's sense! Haw! haw! haw!"

The officers made their returns; and nothing more being done, the crowd began quietly to separate.

"This can result in no ultimate good," said Robert to the scout, as they walked into town. "Mystification leaves a wound in the best hearts. Better even to openly seize power than to make them act the fool's part in a farce."

"Oh, bosh!" cried Bludger, stopping at the corner of Court Square. "You surely don't measure negroes by the standard of white men, do you? Why, they have little mind and no heart. Rest assured the sting of resentment will not remain. Good-night."

"You are mistaken," answered Magruder, earnestly. "Last night at the Dangerous Crossing I saw—"

"Oh, spare us the description!" cried the scout, with a grimace, and, laughing, he turned, and walked rapidly toward his office. Robert followed a few steps; but then, feeling that his information was rejected and that he was forced in courtesy to be silent, he entered the causeway leading to his home.

CHAPTER XIII.

Oh! the roast beef of old England,
And oh! the old English roast beef."
The Roast Beef of Old England.

SNOW-TURRETED castle-clouds floated in the rich blue of a bright November sky, and their chasing shadows followed each other over the many-colored forest and across the field where the old school-house stood under the yellow-leafed elm. Since dawn a great ox, flanked with lambs and porkers, had been cooking over hickory-bark coals in a pit dug for the purpose, and long tables, constructed with forked boughs and rough pine planks, now formed a quadrangle about this kitchen of the barbecue.

People were flocking to the scene from all directions. Ladies came in carriages, gayly dressed, with baskets of knickknacks; men on horseback and on foot. Carts loaded with bread and cakes creaked onward toward the field. Negroes in troops came riding their patient mules. A few Indians strolled up with their bows and baskets; and the field assumed the appearance of a market-scene at Bombay.

Old Magruder was everywhere, reading from his tablets and directing the arrangements of his feast. Guileless old man! He never dreamed that the victory was other than the black men's work responding to his conciliatory views. Welcoming each cluster of arrivals, the good old man expatiated with bright eye and glowing smile upon the success of his method, and pointed out the excellences of his barbecue.

About noon the editor drove up in a spring-wagon, which carried a large hamper held steady by the efforts of Madam Frogg; and when the cloth covering was removed it proved to contain fried cat-fish. Robert was standing with Eustace near; and seeing the amphibians' cargo, he called to old Magruder, "The river delegation has arrived. Suppose we begin operations."

"Ah! Robin," said the happy old Scotchman, "wait a bit, until a' the black folk coom!"

"Meister Eustace," he added, turning to this gentleman, "do ye na' like my plan—is't na' ane great success, noo?"

"If you can remove the instinctive mutual aversion of the classes," answered Eustace, "you will accomplish a great work, for two antagonistic races with equal power cannot continue to exist."

The old Scotchman went off smiling, tablets in hand, to another group; but Cecil, who had just

left his daughter, approached and said, "Suppose, Mr. Eustace, that they will not be reconciled, these races, what then?"

"Then," answered Eustace, "they should be separated By constitutional amendment disfranchise the whites in a State set apart to the negroes, and disfranchise the blacks in the white States."

"They would not go," said Cecil; "and if carried to the negro State, they would come back to us."

"Laboring men, the dependent part of the race, the best part for your purposes, would return," said Eustace, "but the ambitious, pushing, intellectual ones would go where they could work out their political fortunes."

"Suppose the antagonism were removed," asked Robert, "what would ultimately result?"

"Amalgamation, undoubtedly," answered Eustace; "without this, permanent peace is impossible. Ireland is torn with orange and green badges; but the badges here are not removable, except by mingling the colors."

"Haw! yaw! yaw! haw!" cried Madam Frogg, waddling away. "By my hallidome! a most improper speech from a single young man! Froggie, darling, distribute the poultry."

"You know," she added, addressing Laura, who was superintending the removal of some cake from

a basket, "we at the Empire City call the little fishes in the river our poultry."

The scout had not appeared in the field. Knowing as he did the true source of the victory, he felt no respect for the old Scotchman's method. Entering the court-house this morning, where they were formally revising the vote from the boxes of the county, he heard a smart looking mulatto say to another that the negro inspectors had been deceived, and Bludger should be held responsible. Nothing like alarm influenced the captain, but he was surprised at the intelligence which the negroes displayed. In fact, he began to think he had underrated his antagonists. He cared nothing for committing a crime, but he would have an unmitigated contempt for himself if he were caught. So the scout sat in an upper window of the court-house, smoking, and looking out at the scene in the field.

When a sagacious man commits an error after fully considering his course, it results from ignorance of an essential element in the problem which he has to solve. This was Bludger's case. Had Robert told him of the scene at the Dangerous Crossing, he might have been warned. But the young man had been forced to keep this to himself. So the scout blundered, and the result was a great disaster.

The day had nearly sped and the sun was far in the west, when Bludger, looking across the field into the forest beyond, saw or thought he saw dusky forms flitting among the undergrowth. He was about to descend and warn the company now dining at the tables. But, gazing more intently, he was persuaded that what he had observed were only shadows in the woods caused by the declining sun.

Several negro men were standing under the elm-trees conversing excitedly, when a young man named Swain, who was studying law in Eustace's office, approached, and one of them, the same mulatto who attracted Bludger's notice in the morning, exclaimed, "Never will we get our rights, until we do like the Indians—pick off a white man for every wrong."

"Keep quiet, sir," cried Swain, approaching and taking the negro by the collar, "or leave the field."

The mulatto's answer was a blow. Staggering back, the youth drew his revolver and fired. A negro returned the shot: and, like magic, firearms were discharged all over the field.

The blacks—men, women, and children—fled in a dense mass to the woods, and a few white men pursued, firing in the air. It was a reckless stampede. But just as the whites approached the line of low bushes over which the negroes had scam-

pered, a hundred dark forms rose before them, headed by the Congo chief.

With a savage howl, these Congos rushed from their ambuscade upon the white men, who now, in turn, broke and fled. The negro men, a thousand strong, fell in behind them, and the black mass pursued the scattered whites over the field.

At the first shot, Robert had walked rapidly to the tables, where old Magruder was with the ladies, and around these he now gathered some of the fugitives, and with Eustace, who had remained there, formed a square. Into this he put the females, and drawing his revolver, faced, like a lion at bay, the approaching host of blacks.

On they came like an avalanche. Wild Rock, the Congo, stalked in front brandishing an enormous club, his face inflamed with savage war. Seeing Robert and this determined band, the chief smiled and, with a lofty salute, passed on, followed by his host, after less formidable victims.

The valiant editor retreated at the opening of hostilities, but unfortunately, deceived by the early success of his friends, stopped, and viewed the battle from afar. Now he was appalled at the approach of the enemy at the heels of his fleeing friends; and thinking only of escape, he crept into a Cherokee-rose hedge. The ostrich, it is said, sometimes hides itself in the sand, but leaves its

tail exposed to betray its hiding-place to pursuers. Unhappy Frogg! He imitated the bird: and a moment later the Congo seized the projecting leg and dragged the editor into light. Clutching the little man by the back, the chief lifted him and turned him about as one might a toad. Then, with a contemptuous "Ugh, Frogg!" he threw him into the midst of the hedge and strode onward.

Heedless of the briers which pierced his limbs, the amphibian thankfully struggled out upon the opposite side of the hedge and ran as fast as his limber legs would carry him, until safe within the walls of the Empire City. The next issue of the *Big Black Crow*, in describing the riot, announced that while the editor claimed no reward for the part which he took in the fray, yet he called attention to the numerous wounds that he received while struggling in behalf of liberty.

When the black host had passed, Robert moved his square slowly toward the town. Signs of violence met them at every step. At the edge of the field a young farmer's body lay mutilated. A merchant was found in his yard, shot through the head. Just as they approached Court Square, flames burst out of five of the frame stores, and the night, which had now set in darkly, was lit with the glare of the conflagration.

The scout at this moment coming from the court-

house met Wild Rock, face to face, on the green. Bludger started; but, instantly realizing that the form before him was no apparition, he remained motionless, awaiting the event. The chief bounded toward him with a yell of rage, raised his war-club, and then paused. If the scout had offered any resistance, the Congo would certainly have brained him where he stood. But Bludger did not move.

"Coward!" hissed the chief, and slapped the scout's face.

Still Bludger stood motionless, and Wild Rock, sated with slaughter, contemptuously turned away, and stalked after his people into the black town, back of the court-house. Had he turned his head, the look of vindictive hate which the scout threw after him would have recalled the Congo to an act of blood; but, looking neither to right nor left, he strode onward into the village where his people dwelt.

With the aid of Eustace, young Magruder now led his charge into the court-house, and, barring the doors, stationed sentries at the windows and on the balconies. In half an hour he felt that he could hold this position against any force which the negroes could bring to the attack. But just as he was beginning to congratulate himself, Eustace approached him, pale and harried, and announced that Laura could not be found.

CHAPTER XIV.

"Methinks her patient sons before me stand
Where the broad ocean leans against the land."
The Traveller.

BLACK and cheerless was the night. A wintry drizzling sleet was blown hither and thither by the shifting winds that whistled around the angles and howled through the long halls of the court-house. The dark clouds shone with a dull red glare from the dying embers of the burned stores. Within the building an expectant silence was unbroken save by the tread of the sentries or the low hum of a group here and there in anxious conversation.

The scout and Eustace were standing with Robert on a balcony overlooking the black town. All was dark and silent there. But the occasional flash of a gun, or a shout, indicated that the negroes had not departed.

"We must weaken our garrison," said Robert, scanning the black heap of hovels, indistinguishable in such a night. "A messenger must go to the hills;" and he looked significantly at the scout.

The latter probably failed to notice the appeal in the darkness, for he said, laughing coarsely,

"Where is the fool to attempt it, in the face of yonder devils on a night like this?"

"I shall search for Laura," said Eustace, decidedly. Robert smiled, and said, "I intended to ask that, for my own presence is necessary here."

Swain, who happened to be guarding this balcony, now stepped forward and said, "By going out the opposite gate I can get into the swamp undiscovered; and I will undertake the trip to the hills."

"Let 'em out! Let 'em go!" hoarsely laughed the scout. "Eustace, if your heads come back on poles, we'll give you first-class funerals."

A few moments later, the great nail-studded oak door of the main hall was unbarred, and the four men stood listening behind it.

"Eustace," said Robert, handing him a revolver, "take this pistol. You are doubtless unarmed, as usual."

"Thank you, no," said Eustace, quietly pushing away the weapon, "I will cut a stout hickory from the next thicket, and this will afford me ample protection."

"But you may be ambushed!" said the scout.

"In that event," replied Eustace, "the pistol would be useless."

"But if you are attacked?" queried Robert.

"I shall defend myself with the stick," answered

Eustace. "I am, however, sure neither will happen. In my stay here I have learned enough of the negro character to believe that they are now frightened at their own work, and are thinking more of how to hide themselves than of attacking any one."

"By St. George!" cried the scout, "I see your head coming back to us now, Eustace. But rest assured we will avenge you!"

"Now go, and fortune favor you!" cried Robert, as he swung open the door.

The two men darted into the night together, and the door closed. Swain, turning to the right, leaped the fence and ran quickly into the swamp. Eustace, on the contrary, walked deliberately to his office, unlocked the door, and changed his shoes for a pair of heavy boots. Reappearing, he took the main causeway in the direction of Magruder's residence. He cut the bough at the first thicket, as he had said, and used it as a walking-stick, and he moved at a brisk step along the middle of the road.

An hour's walk carried him to Magruder's house. All was still. The young man walked around the building first and examined; for while he felt confident that the negroes would not attack him on the open ground, he did not wish to encounter them unexpectedly in the dwelling.

Nothing rewarded his search, and he therefore tried the front door. It was locked. Eustace had supposed that Laura, when she found herself separated from her friends, might have taken the carriage and gone home. This was not the case, and the conviction now forced itself upon him that she was lost.

Heavy breathing now attracted his attention. There on the dark gallery he was beginning to lose some of his calmness. Was this Laura?—perhaps she was hurt! A hairy thing pressed against his hand, and then a cold moist spot. The young man laughed aloud. It was Bracken's nose. On leaving, the family had chained the dog to one of the big posts to prevent his troublesome frolics at the barbecue, as well as to have a guard at the house; and the Newfoundland, after watching the eccentric manœuvres of his friend Eustace for some time, had begun to think that he might be on burglary bent, and, not to be so rude as to bark on mere suspicion, he adopted this method of making his presence known.

The young man unchained the dog, and attempted to call him away from the house. But a difference in views occurred here between the contracting parties. Bracken declined to abandon his post. Eustace, however, began crying, "Laura lost; find Laura, Bracken!" and his dogship so

addressed, after apparently considering the matter a while, gave a last look at the door to see that the house was safe, and started off down the carriage-road, followed by Eustace. The pace was brisk, but Bracken now and then would stop and wait for his companion, who by this means was enabled to keep within hearing distance.

When they reached the field of the barbecue, the dog ran this way and that, sniffing the ground, until he stopped by a spring-wagon. This, then, was Magruder's vehicle, and both Doc Cole and the horses were gone. Laura was certainly now lost. The dog meantime had gone into the coppice, and began to yelp and bark. Eustace followed him with anxiety, which increased to alarm as Bracken emitted a doleful howl. The young man's agitation was not diminished when the dog brought in its mouth a tress of the lost girl's long golden hair.

"Bracken," said Eustace, sitting down in the thicket and wiping the rising moisture from his eyes, "is poor Laura dead?"

The dog uttered a long dismal howl. Then jumping about with a succession of quick, short barks, he darted off through the swamp. Eustace followed the sound, now struggling through a morass, now climbing among the cypress-knees, or entangled in vines, until, just as morning

dawned, he found himself plump up against an earthen bank twenty feet high.

"The levee, Bracken!" he cried; "what does this mean?"

But the dog mounted the embankment and, pausing a moment on the top, darted down to the river's edge, and standing there gave another dolorous howl. The young man approached the water: and there in the early light, just where Bracken stood, he saw the tracks of two little boots. Had she plunged into the river? No, here was the print of a canoe; Laura had left here in a boat.

Nothing that would float was in sight, and further pursuit was therefore impossible. Eustace reluctantly retraced his steps toward the court-house, intending to obtain a boat and further aid, and go upon the river after the missing lady.

The sun was rising as he entered the town, and a martial sight met his view. Swain's errand was accomplished. The hill-men had come. Three hundred guns were now stacked in Court Square; as many horses were fastened to the trees and fences; and the men were lounging about the halls of the court-house or looking at the ruins of the town. Before the young man reached the Square, two more squadrons, as large, galloped in upon the other causeways.

CHAPTER XV.

"A hollow oak our palace is,
Our heritage the sea."
A Wet Sheet and a Flowing Sea.

WHEN the shooting commenced at the barbecue, Laura was near the thicket, whither she went in quest of Bessie. This lady had been sportively placed under her care by Cecil when he left the field before dinner on a business visit to the Capital. She did not find her ward, and was about returning, when the mass of panic-stricken negroes came, and carried her with them into the woods. The advance of the men, which immediately succeeded, left her in the forest surrounded by black women and children. At first she felt no uneasiness, but soon the angry looks of her companions began to excite alarm.

An ugly black amazon approached and, putting her arms akimbo, stared into the lady's face. Laura, assuming a composure which she did not feel, said to the creature, in a tone of dignified command, "Show me to Mr. Magruder's wagon, my woman."

"*Yer* 'uman!" cried the virago, scornfully; "who

is you to order folks? I'll 'uman yer!" Turning to the others, who had approached and stood with threatening gestures awing the poor girl, the negress cried, "Chillun, what mus' we do wid 'er?"

"Kill de hussy!" shouted twenty shrill voices. "Kill 'er! Kill 'er!"

Laura, gentle girl, whose nerves had never been subjected to greater tension than the excitement of a deer-drive, was appalled at this threat, and sinking to the ground, covered her face with her hands.

"Cut her froat! Off wid her head!" cried several of the shrill tones.

The women crowded around the girl's prostrate form, and the black amazon, drawing a long sharp knife, knelt beside her. The lady's long golden hair had fallen about her beautiful neck, and the virago, seizing a handful of the silken strands, severed them with the keen blade. Throwing the soft hair aside, she raised the glittering knife; but, looking up, her arm remained suspended in the air.

A creature lovelier than Laura now stood in the circle of women. Her fairy-like form bore a queenly air, and her great almond eyes flashed as, stamping with her tiny foot, she cried, "Back! What mean ye? Dare ye disgrace the triumph of Wild Rock?"

Dropping her knife, the amazon hurried into the crowd. The women recoiled, leaving a wide space around the unconscious lady's form, and the beautiful apparition, stooping, raised her gently in her arms. Shaking her long wavy hair in a sheen over Laura, the queenly fairy stamped her little foot again, and in rich silvery tones exclaimed, "Be gone!" Waving a tiny, childish hand like alabaster, she cried, "Away, or I shall put that on ye which will follow ye to death!"

The negroes disappeared in the swamp, and the new-comer, laying Laura on the grass, began chafing her temples, and rubbing her arms. It was dusk when the shock had worn off enough for Laura to sit up, supported by a tree. She now opened her blue eyes and gazed into the dark orbs of her preserver; and the two maidens smiled at each other.

"It is growing late," murmured the dark lady, in soft, dove-like accents. "Can you walk?"

Laura, assisted by her companion, arose, and they proceeded along a narrow path through the forest. Darkness came, and the wind whistled among the great swaying trees. Rain dashed coldly in their faces. But the good fairy knew the path well, and never lost her footing in the night. Encouraging Laura, and aiding her now and then, the little creature stopped at last under a huge

old cottonwood-tree, whose limbs, covered with interlacing vines, made a perfect tent.

"This is my summer-house," said the fairy; "but it is not good for cold nights. Wait here a moment." The dark lady disappeared and Laura sat down at the root of the tree. Soon the rain ceased; and the lady, returning, threw a shawl about Laura, and said, "Come, now, and follow me."

A few steps carried them to the levee. Beyond this they found a small bark canoe. Seating Laura in the boat, her companion followed, as she stepped in pushing it from the shore with her little foot. A slender mast was raised, the tiny sail, moistened by the rain, caught the breeze, and the boat glided like a swan over the flowing river.

A thousand stars reflected from the clearing sky danced upon the white-capped waves. Birds on the leafy shore sang welcome to a rising moon. And Laura, warm in her cosey wraps, fell into a gentle sleep.

When she awoke, the boat was moored in a small inlet, hidden by grassy banks covered with foliage, and in a soft moonlight the darkly beautiful features of the fairy girl were bending over her.

"Come," she murmured in soft accents and with a gentle smile, "another step and we are safe!"

"Who is my preserver?" asked Laura. "Tell me, that I may love the generous being to whom I owe my life."

The smile faded, and a shadow came over the now pensive face. "A nameless woman," she answered sadly, "whom you must not know—of a proscribed race that you cannot love. Come, I lead you to safety."

Laura arose and followed. Approaching a great oak in a wood near by, the mysterious guide touched a spring, and a door opened. They entered the hollow tree, and descending a winding stair, stood in a narrow and long but elegant apartment. The ceiling and walls were of quaintly carved wood and tastefully gilded. The floor was covered with Brussels carpet. Glittering chandeliers hung from above. Costly furniture was arranged in apparent confusion with bear-skins, and stuffed serpents, and the enormous vertebræ of antediluvian sea-monsters. An eagle perched above the door flapped its great wings and flew to meet the fair stranger.

Approaching a marble-like column that stood in the centre of the room, the dark lady drew from an embossed silver urn an aromatic liquid, in appearance like coffee, and giving the draught to her visitor, she smiled kindly and said, "Drink!"

Laura drank; and as she handed back the

cup, the lights grew dark before her, and she sank into deep slumber. Gently raising her fair form, the unknown bore her to one of the many doors that opened into this long hall, and entering, laid her on a soft, warm couch. Then returning, the dark lady took from the case a guitar, and, sitting near a fire of bark-coals which burned on a hearth made of zinc and covered with clay, she touched the strings; and ere long the rich, clear musical notes of this almond-eyed girl filled the long hall and resounded through the arches of the cavern in a song as wildly mournful as the sad story of her life.

CHAPTER XVI.

"Two souls with but a single thought,
Two hearts that beat as one."

Ingomar, the Barbarian.

ECHOES of the song lingered in the cave-like apartment, when a firm tread descended the stairway, and Wild Rock strode across the carpet and sat upon a bear-skin near the fire. The Congo sat in silence, and his harsh features wore an expression of melancholy. At last he looked toward the dreamily mournful girl.

"Daughter of my sister's child," he said in his native language, "Wild Rock is a warrior!"

The harsh Bornoo words, which are translated for the gentle reader's convenience, became musical when uttered by the girl.

"Why is the warrior sad?" she asked, rising and approaching the chief.

"My people are afraid," he answered, his dark face working with grief and scorn. "They looked on the white men, and have hidden themselves."

"Chief, they will come forth again," said the girl, laying her hand on his shoulder, "and choose you ruler after the white man's way."

"The Congo needs no choice!" exclaimed the harsh voice of the chief; "Wild Rock is a prince!"

Rising, he looked at his companion, and pointing upward, he said, in the deep gutterals of his Koruru tongue: "When an acorn held the oak above us, Wild Rock played by the broad Zaire River, about the door of a king. Traitors dethroned the chief and sold his family to the white men. But the king's son served no master. This river rose like the Congo, and the young prince let their dirt-bank wash away. Fools! They thought the chief was buried in the water. As well drown the crocodile in the marshes of Darbanda!"

The girl was silent, looking up into the old warrior's working face. Gazing straight before him into vacancy, unobservant of the fair creature, he again broke forth in harsh deep tones: "The young oak I brought from the woods and planted on the island which the wrecked boat was making. It grew; and I said, The King of the wild wood, though transplanted, yet lives. But I looked, and its heart was dead. Child of my kinswoman, the forest monarch totters to his fall!"

So deep and stern were the old chieftain's last words that the girl shuddered, and listened, almost expecting to hear the hollow oak crashing above their home. The old man looked down into her frightened eyes, and sadly smiled.

"Little of the Koruru is in you, child. You belong rather to the whites. Better, perhaps, had I left you with them to practise the peaceful arts you had learned. But I would not see the white man served by the daughter of a king."

"Yet have you made me happy here," answered the girl's musical accents, and she sighed. "Am I not a queen among your people?"

The old man's voice was soft and his manner gentle as he answered, "When I am gone, Marie, do not forsake the poor creatures. Work out for them a happiness which I could not achieve."

The girl smiled in the old chieftain's face, and gently asked, "Am I greater than Wild Rock?"

"In your influence stronger, my daughter," answered the old negro, seriously, "because you are of the double race. But your fate must be joined with the destiny of a white leader. To-day on the field I saw them all: Frogg, the reptile; Cecil, the graceful panther; Eustace, the stag; and the jackal scout. But one only is worthy of my princess—the young lion, Magruder!"

"Father," said Marie, rising and standing before the old man, "Robert Magruder is truly the lion of his race, and fitted to command; but how know you that he would unite his destiny with that of a poor negro girl?"

The chief looked sternly for a moment at the

graceful form before him, and then a kind, proud smile spread over his wrinkled face. "Because he has seen thee, daughter," he said. "In thine own land, my princess, kings would seek thy hand."

"But, father," said the girl, trembling, "great is their hatred of commingling with our race. If the young Magruder should refuse to espouse the cause?"

"Then, woman," said the old chieftain, rising to his commanding height and throwing back his grizzled head, "shout the Voodoo hymn, and lead my suffering people out from the land of bondage!"

The girl's face was resplendent; her graceful form expanded and her dark eyes beamed with a noble light as, raising a chiselled hand on high, she said, in low, rich musical tones, "By greater than Voodoo rites, my father, I swear that when a leader like Moses appears, Miriam shall not be wanting!"

Proudly the old chief gazed for a time at the young enthusiast, and then, sitting upon the bear-skin couch again, he relapsed into thoughtful silence.

Afterward Marie told in her soft low tones of the rescue of Laura. The old man listened with a far-off look, and the savage lines in his rough face softened into a tender smile. When the girl ceased speaking, he turned toward her gently.

"My child," he said, "glad am I that you saved

the lady. To-morrow early take her back to her home. Greatly I fear that I did too much this day. But it was hard to see my people wronged. Would that the life of an old throneless king could atone for the evil! Freely would Wild Rock lay his down."

Wrapping his head in a fur that lay near him, the chieftain reclined on the bear-skin, and Marie, drawing some coals to his feet, retired to one of the state-rooms. In a few moments nothing was awake in the boat-cabin save the eagle, which, seated on its perch, gazed upon the form of the barbarian king.

CHAPTER XVII.

"Scion of chiefs and monarchs, where art thou?"
Childe Harold's Pilgrimage.

WHEN Wiley Eustace entered the square, he pressed rapidly through the crowd to the court-house. A young man of mild appearance sauntered in the hall, and approaching, half raised his drooping lids and directed toward the mud-stained arrival a look of languid inquiry. Receiving no answer from Eustace, who was pushing by, the youthful exquisite softly opened his dark eyes, and articulated, "Want see puty guls? Want see cap'ns?"

"Who are you?" asked Eustace, impatiently. "I have a report."

"Cap'n Tock—on guard," purred the soft-mannered youth, and, slowly rolling his mild eyes, he pointed them to a door, murmuring, "Puty guls," and then toward another, sighing, "Cap'ns." Eustace opened the latter, and confronted General McMack.

"Ah ha!" cried the little man. "Welcome, welcome! We're at a council of war. Advance and

see the colonels—big colonels, all the best in the world!"

Ushered into the room by the smiling and bowing little gray-head, Eustace found himself in presence of the scout and Robert, who were apparently debating some proposition. Near them stood Alex Norman and a stranger. The latter, a fierce, military-looking little man, with high-top boots which he wore over his pantaloons, and enormous mustache which he was twirling savagely, advanced and exclaimed, "How now, door-keeper! Who's this intruder, be gar!"

"Mr. Eustace—Colonel Jinks! Colonel Jinks—Mr. Eustace!" smiled the little gray-head, bobbing about.

"I return from an expedition with my report," said Eustace, quietly. "Who commands here?"

Robert now observed them, and approaching Eustace with an anxious and careworn face, he asked, "Where is Laura?"

The explanation was given, and Magruder at once insisted that the men should march to the point on the river where Eustace saw the tracks. Bludger objected, and urged that the object of the expedition was to intimidate the negroes, and that the main body at least should make a detour through the country under his sole orders. Moreover, he professed to have little confidence in the dog's dis-

covery, and thought it probable that the young lady had never left the woods. Colonel Jinks thought so too, and insisted that "the noble scout, be gar!" should have full command.

Norman sided with Robert, and Eustace expressed decidedly the same views. But Jinks and the scout were firm, and ultimately it was settled that their parties should divide, Magruder, with as many men as chose to follow him, going to the river, and the scout leading the remainder. Breakfast, which was now announced, afforded the fierce little colonel, with "Cap'n Tock" and other emisaries of Bludger, a chance to talk among the men; and, when the choice was offered them afterward, Norman was disgusted to see his own Foresters go with the scout. In fact, Eustace, Norman, and Magruder set out together with no follower save old Bracken.

These three, with the dog, walked over the Big Road to the river, and taking a skiff proceeded down the stream toward the place where the tracks were seen. A great bend here in the stream made a peninsula. At the upper side of this was the county town, and at the lower the Empire City. The tracks were in the middle of the bend, half-way between these places. So like an ox-bow was this bend that boats consumed two hours in steaming from the flat-boat to the county-town landing, while a

buggy on the causeway could cross the neck in thirty minutes.

The sturdy oars pulled by Norman and Robert carried the boat down the swift current, in which Eustace, as coxswain, was careful to steer, faster than a steamer would ordinarily ascend the river; and they were almost off the point when a sharp volley of rifles resounded from the woods.

"What is that?" asked Eustace, hastily.

"From the start I have feared a massacre of the negroes," answered Robert, "and I believe it has now begun."

"Why on earth did you not tell me?" exclaimed Norman. "Had I dreamed of such a thing, the Foresters should not have gone with the scout."

Dense smoke now arose here and there upon the peninsula, curling above the trees.

"Look!" cried Robert, "they are burning the negroes' cabins."

The skiff rounded the point, and went down with the current until the wharf-boat was passed, and the island came into view. Bracken now showed signs of uneasiness, and as they approached the island he jumped out and swam ashore.

At this moment another volley of rifles was heard from the mainland, and Eustace, looking back, exclaimed, "They are following us!"

"Yes," answered Magruder, gazing in the same

direction. "But, meantime, the scout has done a great wrong yonder."

A boat now approached, containing the scout, with Jinks and Tock and a number of their men.

"By St. George!" cried Bludger across the water, "we know where the stray lambkin is hid. Wild Rock has her on yonder island. Cole disgorged the whole plot to save his black hide!"

"What have you done to the negroes?" asked Robert, sternly.

"Hoity toity! What now?" cried the scout. "By St. George! this youth's capacity for digesting stray lambkin is diminished by a few bullet-holes."

Robert turned away in disgust, and at his signal the boat shot toward the island. Eustace leapt ashore, and following the dog, reached the oak-tree. One blow broke in the bark door, and descending the stairway, he confronted the Congo chief.

Laura and Marie stood in the rear, arrayed for setting out to the former's home. Before them stood Wild Rock, grasping a cocked pistol. An ominous frown was on the old chief's face. But as Robert quickly followed Eustace, Marie threw her fair form between them, and the Congo smiled.

Here the contest would have ended had not the scout now come down the stairway, followed by his wild rout. Aiming his revolver over Robert's shoulder he fired, and Wild Rock fell. A look of fierce hatred came into the chieftain's face, and he covered Bludger with his pistol. Then seeing that he must kill Magruder to reach his enemy, the Congo let his weapon fall. Blood spouted from an artery near his heart; and slowly sinking, the old man said, in his broken English, "Bewar de nake hind you, Magruder—dat reptile—ting—you—to—death !"

A film spread over the chieftain's eyes. The grizzled head sank upon the carpet. Wild Rock was dead !

CHAPTER XVIII.

"Wheel the wild dance
While lightnings glance
And thunders rattle loud,
And call the brave
To bloody grave,
To sleep without a shroud."

The Dance of Death.

WHEN Wild Rock fell, as described, Marie ran to his prostrate form, and taking his head in her arms, bent over the dead chief. Bludger was aiming to shoot again. But Robert Magruder turned upon him and sternly said, "You have done harm enough. Leave!"

The scout hesitated, but, observing something in the young man's eye which he cared not to brave, he turned about and, muttering, ascended the stair. At the broken door stood Norman, with a frown on his swarthy brow.

"Come, boys," cried the scout, as he stepped from the hollow tree, "the old bear is dead. Let's hunt the cubs!"

"Mr. Bludger, I command the Foresters!" said a deep, stern voice behind him; and turning, he confronted the dark-eyed giant.

"My men are not murderers," said Norman.

"If you are minded to hunt sheep and call them bears, do so, but without our aid."

"Foresters, fall into line," cried Alex, and a few minutes after he was conducting his command in boats to the shore, whence he marched them immediately to their homes.

The section of Foresters who were on the island left the scout by the river with Colonel Jinks, Captain Tock, and a few kindred spirits; and these, taking to their boat, soon reunited with a motley crew on the mainland.

In the sunken boat-cabin, after the scout's departure, a striking scene was presented. Laura stood between her brother and Eustace, and Marie bent over the dead chief. Her long waving hair mingled with his grizzled wool, hiding her beautiful face. No sound escaped her, but her attitude was the picture of woe.

"We cannot leave the girl," said Magruder. "Sister, ask her to come. I will see that the old man's body—"

"Go!" said Marie, turning to them a face marked with unutterable grief. "Go!" she repeated, in a hard, hopeless tone. "Let the slave bury his own dead!"

They retired at her bidding, and soon Laura was being rowed over the river by her companions.

As the island slowly sank into the wave behind

the moving boat, a faint blue smoke curled above its trees. A bateau shot out from the willows on the mainland. Another and another followed. Soon the broad river was dotted with little boats, converging toward the signal.

Late in the afternoon a strange flotilla went up the river. Hundreds of bateaux rowed by black men were locked in a dense mass about a barge. On this a bed was made of green boughs, and the body of the Congo chief, crowned with oak-leaves, lay on this bier. A wild, plaintive dirge rose from the cortege, keeping time with the oarage of their brawny arms.

The sobbing wind seemed wailing a people's grief, and the storm's artillery firing random guns, as the sun, like a great fireball, plunged into a black pile of western clouds, and the quick lightning flashed the approach of a tempest.

The flotilla landed, and the black men carried the bier into a log-hut. Night and the storm approached together. Through the tempest the Congos came to perform their wild funeral rites. Each carried a dry pine-branch, which he flung by the dead chief's body. A circle was formed about the bier, and in every pause of the wailing wind, through all the dark hours of the storm, arose the steady tramp, tramp of their horrible dance of death.

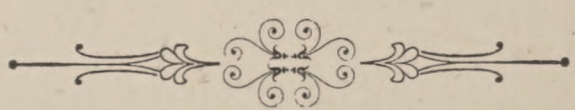
Later a line of dark figures marched around the hovel bearing pine-knot torches. The red glare lit up their swarthy savage features. Circling the pyre thrice, they whirled the blazing fagots about their heads and threw them into the pile of dry branches.

An instant all was dark, then fire-tongues licked the cabin. Here and there black smoke poured through the thatched roof, followed by a sheet of flame. The tempest flashed and thundered, the negroes wailed and sobbed: and under the weird arches of the forest burned Wild Rock's funeral-pyre.

WILD ROCK

A Tale of Two Seasons

By WANDERER



"Come, gentle Spring! ethereal mildness, come"

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WILD ROCK.

A TALE OF TWO SEASONS.

SPRING.

CHAPTER I.

"The lamest cripples of the brothers
Took oaths to run before all others."

Hudibras.

TWO months after the events last recorded, a short Southern winter had stripped the old leaves from the trees, and the bare limbs were already swelling with the buds of a new year's foliage. Rains had filled the bayous in the swamp; the roads were miry; pools of muddy water stood here and there. This morning a fog lay on the river, and hung like long moss among the trees upon the shore. Out in the gray haze the sounding fog-whistle of a passing boat was heard.

Within the Empire City activity prevailed. Frogg was arranging the attractions of the Big

Black Bar, and his wife was waddling about with a wet towel rubbing the counters and shelves.

"Hubbie," said Madam Frogg, looking at the broad face of an old Dutch clock, whose hands pointed to eleven, "nearly Saturday midday and not a customer yet! What can they mean?"

The little man swallowed his chin, and popped out his eyes, and his limber legs bent under his protruding body as he croaked, "Faix, it's the birrud on the paiper that scares the kraturs, me gurrul. I think I'll have the stereotypers to cast me a nagur, and call the name 'Big Black Agriculturist'—how is that fur a device?"

"A thing of beauty is a joy forever," sighed the lady, hanging up the damp towel. "Never, oh, Froggie, darling, have I liked the black crow, and I approve the agricultural man. It is like the days of old, and will please the auncion regame."

"Divil a bit care I for the auncion regame," croaked the little man. "The nagurs have been offish iver since their big man was kilt, and I won't have the thrade injured. I'm a gintleman of Oirish dascent, be gorrah, an'—"

"Not necessarily, therefore, of dacent Oirish, by St. George!" cried Bludger, entering the door. "Pish!" continued the scout, dashing the moisture from his coarse hair and beard. "This fog is aw-

ful. It goes to a man's bones. Have you seen any of my niggers here this morning?"

"Be gorrah, no, nor anybody else!" answered the editor. "Where—"

"By my hallidome!" interrupted Mrs. Frogg, "methinks you men have frightened the miseries away."

"By George! madam," cried Bludger, "you are nearer the truth than you imagine, I fear. Every cabin on my place is empty. But here is Cecil. Let's hear his report."

The iron-gray gentleman advanced in his usual urbane manner, and gracefully waving a greeting to all, he said, "Your bird, madam, will certainly be lonely, for the other black crows have flown. Belle Brook plantation is deserted, and at Hanging Moss I found only an octogenarian. This old fellow gravely informed me that his progeny had set out for Kansas, leaving him to my care. Ha! ha! ha!"

"Now, by St. George!" cried the scout, "I see nothing to laugh about, Percy Cecil. This will make a wilderness of our valley."

"By no means," said Eustace, who, with Robert, now entered the boat. "The valley will be happier for their absence, and they will be more prosperous elsewhere."

"Absurd!" exclaimed the scout. "Who will till the land?"

"All that disturbs me," said Cecil, "is our loss of representation in the Federal Government."

"Rest assured," answered Eustace, "that neither apprehension will be realized. The world is not so inviting but that another race will soon settle these rich acres."

"White men?" cried the scout. "Never, sir, never! Why, they would rule the country, and we should lose our prestige."

"Be gorrah!" croaked Frogg, completely swallowing his chin, and sidling up to Eustace on his limber little legs, "and do ye think, Maister Eustace, that some of the boys wull come over from Oirland?"

"I do, in truth, Mr. Frogg, and from Germany and elsewhere; and the circulation of the *Big Black Crow* will doubtless greatly increase."

"Froggie, darling, by my hallidome! sure the Mulligans and O'Harahans will buy the paiper, and the O'Donnells and the O'Gradys and—"

"Spare us these conjugal felicitations!" cried the scout, eying with unconcealed disgust the little editor and his corpulent helpmeet, who, in their glow of hope, were embracing one another. "And, gentlemen," he added, turning his back on Eustace and facing Cecil and Magruder, "let us devise some means to stop this stampede."

"Where are the creatures?" asked Cecil, half

amused. "Certainly they have not sunk into the ground."

Apparently they had not, for now a confused murmur of many voices was heard out in the fog, and up the levee came shrill voices singing a song whose burden was, "We'll raise our homes in Kansas."

Madam Frogg, followed by the others, hurried out upon the levee. The fog was rising into clouds. And there, as far as the eye could reach, was a long, straggling line of black people—old men and children, women carrying infants, young girls and youths—all marching along the river-bank, singing the glories of the promised land, with the thundering chorus, "We'll raise our homes in Kansas."

"Here, you exodusters!" cried Madam Frogg, waddling up to the fat citizen who headed the procession. "Here!" she repeated, her round face glowing like a rising moon, "where are you going?"

The fat citizen, swelling with pomposity, thundered back the chorus, "I'll raise my home in Kansas!"

"You goose, you!" cried Madam Frogg, gesticulating violently. "Don't you know the ice is six feet deep there now? It will freeze your home square off, the instant you raise it in Kansas."

Appalled by this picture, the fat citizen turned

appealingly to the lean enumerator, who marched by his side. But the good lady saw her advantage, and, mindful of the prosperity of the Empire City, put in before the lean man could open his long jaws, crying, as she looked down the host, "Not an overcoat or a meal's vittals among ye, nor a cow or a mule! Why, you'll starve! No boats! By my hallidome! how do you expect to cross the river?"

"Does we hab ter cross?" asked the lean citizen, helplessly.

"Of course you do," cried Madam Frogg. "Don't your great leader know Kansas is on the other side? How can you get over, hey?" And the good lady waddled back and forth before the black column, and looked at them triumphantly. But her glory was short.

"Pshaw!" cried the fat citizen, after a moment's deep meditation, "we heads de ribber! Fur'rd, chilluns!"

Pushing the good woman out of the path, away went the vast line of blacks, shouting their chorus.

Without other food than they had in their pockets, or raiment than they wore upon their backs, men, women, and children went tumbling and crowding along up the levee, to round the head of the Mississippi River and "raise their home in Kansas."

CHAPTER II.

"Met in consultation
To cant and quack upon the nation."

Hudibras.

ONWARD moved the singular procession, past the squad of white people who stood watching the scene. A man went by with his wife and five children, the smallest hardly able to walk. Next came a young mulatto leading his hog by a string, and his wife followed carrying the baby. Stumping along went a little old fellow whose right arm and left leg were off, shouting the chorus at the highest power of his still vigorous lungs. Covered with mud-spots, but wearing a look of steady determination, a woolly-headed urchin came past, his firm purpose in Kansas to lift his home singing with a tired but resolute voice.

After looking at the straggling line some minutes, Bludger turned to his companions and said, "Something must be done to stop this desertion. If you will meet at the court-house in four hours, I will turn scout again and bring you a report of

where their army camps for the night. Such a mass of disorganization cannot get very far."

"A capital idea," remarked the iron-gray gentleman; and laughingly he bowed to the other men and said, "Suppose we turn couriers and notify the country of the meeting?"

"Robert, bring your father," said Cecil, his eyes twinkling with amusement, as they separated on their errands. "A substantial barbecue will be effectual, I think, upon the exodus."

Young Magruder, on reaching the residence, found the old Scotchman upon the gallery, seated, reading his tablets, and accosted him as he approached: "They are going to meet at the court-house and want you."

"What?" asked the old man, looking up vacantly.

"The negroes are leaving the country," said Robert, perceiving that his father's memory was at fault, "and Percy Cecil wants you to meet him and others at the court-house to stop the exodus."

"Robin, my bonny bairn," said the old Scotchman, in a musing manner, "weel do I mind how Angus Macfarlane used to hold forth on the Exodus. An unco gude mon was Angus, Robin."

"Father," exclaimed the young man, at his wits' end, "the negroes—the negroes!"

"Aweel! aweel!" said the venerable Scotchman,

with a sigh, "the ould warld ha' passed awa', Robin, an' ye wad ding your new-warld clavers into ane ould mon. But ye canna, Robin, ye canna, for the ould mon lives in the past."

The son bowed his head and thought awhile. It would not do thus. He must arouse the old gentleman. "Father," he asked, "do you know Percy Cecil?"

"Percy! I ha' heard my gran'ther name Northumberland," answered the old man. "But Cecil I dinna ken. Come, bonny Robin, I can tell ye mony a story o' the ould warld. Would ye know, my bairn, o' the Percies?"

"Not now, thank you," answered Robert, walking into the house; "later I will be glad to listen."

Entering, he searched for Laura. His sister was, however, at the time contemplating the effect on dinner of Dinah's absence; and without seeing her he remounted his horse and rode to the court-house.

Delayed by the mire left after winter rains, the young man reached the building to find the meeting in progress. About twoscore persons were assembled, among them the men of the mystic sign, and the scout was concluding his report.

"I left them at the burned cabin of Wild Rock," he said, "where they have encamped to take a last

drink from the sunken tank and a long farewell of the country. Some have embarked already upon passing steamboats; and unless they are speedily met with vigorous assurances from a person upon whom they rely, by St. George! the entire race will march to-morrow to the infernal regions or elsewhere. My suggestion," added Bludger, amid applause from the men of the ceiled room, "is to drive them back to their work."

"This will never do!" exclaimed Cecil. "They are now an undesirable population, and such treatment would render them unbearable. Thus far we have not interfered with their destiny. The race was neither enslaved nor freed by our agency. We have taken them as we found them. My advice now is to let them severely alone."

"What will become of them?" asked Eustace; "they are helpless."

"The government," said Cecil, "emancipated, citizenized, and enfranchized them. To the North belongs exclusively the honor and responsibility. We share in neither the glory nor accountableness. Let the nation care for its wards."

"We cannot afford," cried the scout, "to let the people go. If we may not force them, then we should send Colonel Magruder with full power to promise anything they ask, provided they will return to their work."

"Surely we are bound to keep the creatures here," unctuously remarked one of the ten. "Once separated from us, superstition and barbarism would seize the race and engulf them in ruin."

Another of the mystic ten, arising with a sour smile, added, "Yes; and, as a member of the Union, this country must protect its prosperity lest the other members suffer."

"What says Colonel Magruder?" asked Bludger. "Will he go?"

"Understanding that you are willing to assume the responsibility of rectifying any wrongs of which the black people complain," said Robert, addressing the assembly, "I am willing to use my utmost influence to keep them here; and I believe that I can succeed."

Applause from every one but Cecil and Eustace greeted this speech. When the noise subsided, Robert said (and he was singularly pale as he spoke): "Much do I prefer to remain as I am; but if you bid me promise, I will in your name and my own assume the guardianship of this people's rights."

"Go! Stop them!" cried voices in all parts of the room. Magruder bowed and, turning, walked out the door, followed by continued applause and cries of "Stop them, Magruder! Bring them back!" Leaving the house, he went immediately

to the negro camp. They had lighted fires, and as evening approached the red glow under the arches and the smoke rising among the forest-trees, with the groups of black men and women, made the encampment as picturesque as that of Timour when starting upon some great invasion.

Magruder passed unchallenged to the centre of the host. Here, at the spot where the cabin was burned, he found Marie, with some women and five or six black men. One of the latter, a blacksmith named Clinch, asked him his mission.

"I come from the white men assembled in the court-house," replied Robert, "to promise you redress of your grievances, and urge you to return to your work."

"Mr. Magruder," answered Clinch, "in behalf of my people, who have told me to speak, we wants equality. We is ignorant. We is not able to enforce just for ourselves. Wild Rock is dead. Will you instruct us what to do like he did, and protect our rights? If you promise this, we goes back: but nothing else will do."

A buzz of excitement arose in the woods. Robert now became aware that the encampment had fallen in behind him, and the black people were encircling the place where he stood with their leaders. He was to address, in his answer, the entire race in this country.

Looking around at the dark eyes which gleamed about him in the woods, the young man answered, "I will be to you as Wild Rock."

Marie bent eagerly forward, and from the woods arose a low hum, which heightened to a shout. "Swear!" cried the negroes.

"Here at the pyre of the Congo chief I swear," answered Robert, pale, but with a leonine grandeur, under the red arches of the forest; "I swear that I will be to you people the same as Wild Rock!"

A wild yell burst from ten thousand throats, and the forest rang again as the host proclaimed him chief.

In the court-house the listening men heard the great cry; and Bludger, turning from the window, a dark scowl on his face, cried, "By St. George! the man has betrayed us and made himself a king."

"Absurd!" exclaimed Eustace. "The shout only declares success."

The scout, without answering, looked gloomily at the mystic ten.

"He means," said Cecil to Eustace, "that Magruder now controls absolutely the immense blind power of the blacks."

"Why, true," said Eustace, in surprise; "but did you not send him for this purpose? From their

very nature, any man who leads the negroes must be in this sense a king."

"Down with any man who bands the blacks together!" cried Bludger. "The man has made himself king." And with a scowl the scout departed, followed by seven others of the mystic sign.

"What can the negro accomplish while thus repressed?" said Eustace to Cecil, who stood near him regarding these men as they left. "Education is no help, for they will not permit him to use his knowledge."

"Yes, it is useless," said the iron-gray gentleman, "except as another weapon in the race-conflict. Negroes and white men will not mingle in their pursuits."

"Government should purchase a home for the creatures," said Eustace, warmly. "Their condition is worse than when their owners protected them for their value."

Percy Cecil regarded the speaker with a sarcastic smile; then slightly shrugging his shoulders, he turned easily away and in his graceful manner approached his daughter.

CHAPTER III.

"One unbroken shadow spread through the long cathedral aisle of forest-trees."—*The Village of La Riccia.*

LATE at night returning from the conference where everything had been arranged with the negroes, Magruder was gratified to see the dying fires in the camp deserted. The black people were already returning to their homes. But the young man did not look like a victor. His arms were folded over his breast, his eyes were bent thoughtfully on the ground, and a shadow of deep sadness rested on his leonine features.

Slowly approaching the square, he was startled by the hum of many voices, and looking up saw a blaze of light shining from the court-house windows. A weary smile crossed his face, and he murmured, "Ah! they are glad to keep their workmen. But the price—the price!" With these half-spoken words Magruder entered the brilliantly lighted room.

He was astonished to see the place crowded with ladies and gentlemen. They were standing to receive him. Obviously, acquainted with the success

of his mission, they intended to make him the hero of a night.

Some of the white people were there who regarded Robert's visit to the black camp as a pleasant masquerade, and looked upon his successful negotiation as a ruse to deceive their enemies. They had prepared for him a surprise which they assumed would prove most agreeable.

When the young man stepped into the hall, a number of gayly dressed girls began a chorus descriptive of his triumph over the Congo, and Miss Cecil, whom they had induced to join them, advancing, presented him a basket of flowers from her father's green-house, so arranged as to make the inscription: "Magruder, the Bravest of the Brave."

The young man started; a deep flush suffused his face, and, gently pushing away the basket, he turned without a word and mingled with the crowd.

"You should have taken the flowers," said Eustace, touching his arm. "Why offend these people?"

"I acted just as I felt," answered Magruder. "You know me well enough to be aware that my word once given to the negroes, persons who intend to deceive them have nothing to hope from my aid."

"Let us walk over to my office," said Eustace, observing the looks of anger and amazement which the young man's words called up to the faces of men standing about them.

Robert's declining the flowers occasioned only a little ripple of amused wonder; but when his reason was whispered about the room, a buzz of angry excitement followed; and this increased as the young man left the hall with Eustace. The words "scallawag" and "carpet-bagger" were heard in every variety of emphasis, and Miss Bessie, with a toss of her pretty head, went to an open window and threw the flowers into the yard. Soon after the assembly dispersed, excitedly discussing the incident.

When Robert reached the office whither he was conducted by Eustace, the latter handed him a box of cigars. Lighting the fragrant Havanas and seating themselves by a warm fire, the two young men began to discuss the question suggested by the events of the day.

"A grand destiny is before the negroes if they will work it out," said Robert. "In process of time a new race may spring into existence here, uniting the strength and docility of the negro with the intellect of the white man."

"And a new race of beasts will follow," said Eustace, impatiently, "uniting a bovine heart with

an asinine head. Much loose talk, Magruder, springs from improper use of the word 'race.' Four races exist—Indian, African, Caucasian, and Asiatic. These have mingled, but never combined. Families of one race will amalgamate, like the Saxons and Normans in England. Races will not. America affords the latest example, and the white and red are not combined. Spain and the West Indies offered rare opportunities for amalgamating black and white; but the Moors returned to Africa, and the negroes and French have not made a new race in Hayti. Asiatics, since the days of Clive, have lived with white men at Bombay, yet the 'Black Town' is as distinct from the 'White Town' there as yonder hamlet of huts, where our negroes live, is different from this thriving village."

Magruder thought of the black attachment to the soup-ladle, and sadly smiled. It was only the addition which had grown to each town in the State after the Africans were freed. But this assemblage of ill-constructed hovels, when made to flourish in Wiley's flowing sentences, struck Robert as somewhat ludicrous. And as he thought of the inhabitants of this black town working out for themselves a grand destiny, he was abashed at the absurdity of the idea. Still, this was not the question for him. He had pledged the

Magruders' faith to these creatures, and he would redeem it with the Magruders' blood. After a while he quietly said this to his companion.

"Then, Robert," said Eustace, "devote yourself to this proposition; colonize the negro. If successful, you will do good. The whites are more energetic, thrifty, intelligent, brave, and firm; and so long as the blacks live with the higher race, they will recognize their masters. You are doing them no good service to force them into a conflict which must end in their defeat. But if you can put the blacks off to themselves, they may accomplish something. At all events, they will manage their own affairs and cease to injure the white man."

"But my engagement was to see them righted here," answered Robert, somewhat puzzled, "when I stopped them at Wild Rock's pier!"

"Bob," said Eustace, laying his hand on Magruder's arm, "next time they start, let them go!"

The gray light of dawn began now to creep through the shutters, and Magruder took leave of his friend. Several squads of black men, meeting him as he wended his way toward his father's residence, greeted him with enthusiasm, and assured him that all had returned to work.

During the night the encampment, in truth, had dissolved as suddenly as it had formed, and morning found the black people at their

cabins. Young Magruder, during this day, discovered that he had become the centre of the negroes' trust. Whenever he passed them on the road or in fields, he felt their great patient ox-eyes following him. This was to Robert a source of sorrow, for nothing so troubles a generous nature as to be the hope of dependent creatures without power to aid them.

Now resulted something which could not occur except in a population stratified like that of which we write. If the people had all been simple blacks, the young man would have been practically, as Bludger said, a monarch. Had all been cultivated white men, he would have been a recognized political leader. Owing to the irreconcilable conflict between the classes, however, this man, so magnetic as to attract a whole race, with intellect to perceive their troubles and plan relief, and youth, courage, and force of character to extricate the people from their social and moral wilderness, found himself, the instant he began to organize one of the classes, an object of suspicion, fear, and hatred to the other.

Those crawling things which live in the ooze of political strife and fatten upon the troubles of a nation, had too much interest in perpetuating the conflict to peaceably submit to its reconcilement. If the young man's followers had been

enlightened Caucasians, he would, like the elder Brutus, in triumphing over the nation's parasites have insured an age of prosperity to his country ; but he was supported by a degraded race, and, like Rienzi, faced the dire necessity of banding them against their masters. Working upon the fears of the patricians, as the Colonna and Orsini would have done, Bludger and his mystic brethren sought to maintain their power by crushing the young tribune of the people.

With a following of freemen, of Anglo-Saxon freemen especially, attempts of this nature have always resulted in the triumph of the popular cause, no matter how great the opposition. London repeatedly returned Wilkes to Parliament over the protests of a powerful nobility; Paris can boast of her Gambetta, and Dublin had her O'Connell and Grattan. But what becomes of the champion of popular right when the people, as Wild Rock said, become frightened and hide themselves?

It is useless to say that the African is unable to assert his rights as a citizen because he lacks firmness. This is but to announce a fact. The question is, Having conferred rights upon a people who, as now circumstanced, are unable to use them, is it not the duty of government, as the guardian of its citizens and the preserver of its own existence,

to place this race in such a situation that it shall exercise its rights of citizenship?

Here is an element of disturbance to the peace of the South and of menace to the existence of the Union. Shall the power that extended over them the ægis of citizenship, which created the difficulty, eliminate this element by prompt action and judicious expenditure, or wait for another civil convulsion to work the cure in nature's way, at a cost of millions of money and lives and a legacy of untold sorrow?

My charming friend of political proclivity, far be it from my purpose to hint that you have not an inalienable right to the office of doctor of the nation. But allow me mildly to suggest that in this black spot you have a symptom of the plague; and should you play with the danger instead of devising a cure, the body politic may become diseased beyond even your transcendent skill.

CHAPTER IV.

"By the pricking of my thumbs,
Something wicked this way comes."—*Macbeth.*

IT was the morning after the scene last described, and the sun was shining brightly; but the shutters of the ceiled room were closed, and in its sombre light the men of the mystic sign moved about like familiars in a dungeon of the Inquisition. A great contest was waging among them, and the tie of the brotherhood was strained to breaking.

The scout shook his huge frame in his manner when very determined, and pushing his harsh face into the circle of listening men, he exclaimed: "The young traitor must and shall be sacrificed. Our very existence depends upon this cast. A threatened overflow, which no power can avert, is sure to demoralize the negroes. Senator Frizzle and his crew are coming to investigate the riot. If this young Magruder is allowed to band the blacks against us, our power is gone forever."

Cecil replied, in his polished style: "Your con-

clusion is a *non sequitur.* Negroes demoralized by an overflow will be the easier to control. Frizzle's committee is for the approaching Presidential election, and they are too deeply interested in continuing the agitation here to suggest any means of curing the evil. Let Magruder work away, and we will defeat him by peaceable means."

"You are mistaken," cried the scout, shaking the coarse hair over his eyes, and pushing his big head further into the circle. "Every agency that we possess will be taxed to its utmost to overcome this man who has betrayed us. The worst element of the negroes is joined with his old army friends among the whites, and we shall find all our usual methods exposed and made the basis of persecution. Frizzle and those with him may be as worthless as you say, but other men will read the facts he develops, and they will overthrow our power."

"Bludger, I am amazed at you," said Cecil, with a smile half contemptuous. "A man who knows the art of making votes like you to be gulled by an old political fraud! Why, those fellows wish nothing more earnestly than that you shall do some violence to Magruder. What care they for a few lives, if they can retain control of the stronger half of the Union? Let them and the young man alone, and it will all evaporate in a lit-

tle fire for the Northern heart. If your idea be correct that earnest men will read the facts (and I sincerely hope it is), such men will do nothing rash, but will devise a better solution of the trouble than a hot-headed, prejudiced man like you."

"I'm not hot-headed. By St. George! I'm not prejudiced," cried Bludger, rising and shaking himself, and turning exceedingly red, while Cecil smiled. "I demand the vote—the vote! Let's stop this endless discussion!"

"*Viva voce!*" firmly said Cecil. "Let each man show his hand."

"No!" cried the scout, doggedly. "Ballot—such is our rule."

A hat was produced, paper torn, and preparation made by the excited men to adopt the scout's suggestion. Cecil saw that his advice was not regarded, and, rising, in his ever-graceful manner he quietly said, "Unwilling, gentlemen, to become a party to your decision, I shall retire before it is made."

"What!" cried Bludger, advancing toward him menacingly, "will you also betray us?"

"Bravado is wasted on me," said the iron-gray gentleman, calmly regarding the hard features of the scout. "But," he added urbanely, turning to the others, "secrets were never revealed by me, and never shall be! I merely decline to further

act with your association." Bowing, he retired from the apartment, followed by one of his neighbors. Just as they reached the exit from the house, they heard, through the half-open door of the ceiled room, the deep-toned words: "To all traitors—death!"

Cecil and his neighbor rode from the house, and an hour after the scout emerged with his seven companions. Mounting their horses, they separated, and Bludger took the causeway toward his home. He was passing through a part of the swamp where overhanging trees shut out the sunlight, when the rustle of a skirt attracted him, and looking he beheld the island girl.

She was walking along the road in deep thought, unobservant of his approach. Her wonderful beauty had attracted him even in the cave at the scene of the tragedy, and now, when he looked upon her in calmer mood, his headlong impetuosity was aroused, and, careless of consequences, he accosted her.

Riding before the girl, and stopping the road by placing his horse across it, he dismounted and said, "Did I not see you, pretty one, in the sunken boat where Magruder killed Wild Rock?"

The woman started, and, raising her dark eyes, gazed at him in wonder.

Bludger looked up and down the road, and saw

no one. Approaching the girl, he asked, with a laugh, "What was the old man to you?"

The woman's breast was heaving as if it would burst; her eyes sparkled, and a deep red spot burned on either cheek. "He was," she said through her compressed lips, "a—father!"

"Ha! ha! ha!" laughed the scout, again looking up and down the road. "You that old cock's daughter! By St. George! absurd. More likely you were his mistress."

The woman's eyes blazed, and seething through her clenched teeth hissed the words, "Murderer, you lie!"

"A fair challenge, by George!" cried Bludger, and seized the skirt of her garment.

A glittering blade flashed before his eyes, and he stood holding the severed cloth. Marie was gone. Then a pain shot up his hand, and looking down he saw his right forefinger lying on the ground, while the cloth was spotted with blood.

The scout stood a minute regarding his severed finger; then, with a sinister smile of rage and pain, he picked it up, wrapped it in the cloth, and put it in his coat-pocket.

"Sumfin hurt yer? Haw! haw! haw!" cried a hoarse voice at his elbow. "Dat's sense!"

"You black rascal," cried Bludger, writhing with pain and looking fiercely at the dwarf, "mark

my word! Vedoo is coming up with the river to get you for betraying Wild Rock."

The negro turned an ashy hue, as he muttered in a quavering voice, "Marie care for Doc; what yer scare me for?"

"Take care of Marie," said the scout, vindictively, as he walked off holding his hand and leading the sorrel home. "Beware Wild Rock's daughter! What means the flood in the river without rain?"

The river was swelling under the bright sun, a caldron ready to boil. The west-wind kept blowing, and the yellow waves, like tongues, were slapping and licking menacingly about the low embankment. Doctor Cole was troubled by this rainless flood.

That night the Doctor was startled in his cabin by a noise from Beelzebub. Back and forth tore the horse, and snorted frantically. "Witches ride him!" said the negro, waking slowly. "Dat's sense!" There was a splash, a louder snort, and Doctor Cole, looking out, beheld, by the light of a full moon, the animal, with mane erect and ears thrown forward, gazing at its shadow waving in water.

"Vedu mad!" muttered the troubled Doctor, rubbing his woolly head. "Telled on Marie; telled on Wild Rock! Vedu come up out de ribber. Gwine ter conjure Doc." Wading through the rising water, he caught the horse's mane. Holding

this to the light, he looked closely at some tangles in the hair, and cried aloud, "Oh! oh! Witches' stirrups! Oh!"

A shadow fell about him. The horse snorted and ran, and Cole, looking up, beheld a shapeless dark object floating down upon his cabin. It was the sunken tank near Wild Rock's pyre, washed up by the current of a crevasse which the river made that night.

CHAPTER V.

"The moss-covered bucket, which hung in the well."
The Bucket.

WATER, water everywhere. The river had broken the levee in three places, and the entire valley was one vast sea. Out of the yellow waves appeared the tops of ridges, like islands, and parts of the embankment that remained. Houses fell, and their timbers floated away with broken fences. Melancholy groups of negroes, mules and cattle, and a few swine were collected on some of the bits of dry land. Anxiously signalling steamboats which passed, the negroes watched the rising water as it narrowed and narrowed their little standing-places.

Queer rumors flew about, eagerly devoured by these people, and carried hither and thither by the quick bateaux which darted among the islands. One told of a woman who, burning with fever, escaped the watchers, one night, and leaped into the icy embrace of the water-god. Another was of three strong swimmers who attempted to rescue a boy struggling in the crevasse; but the arms of

the water-fiend twined about them and they sank forever.

After a while the great stream arose in the air and hung in dense vapor over the scene. The walls of the remaining houses were damp; moisture dripped from the leafless boughs of the trees. Dank pestilential gases made this like living in a well. The oppression was intense. White men looked like cadavers, black men like ashen ghouls. And when some of the land-owners fled to the hills, the negroes thought that they were abandoned to the river-witches.

Old Magruder walked the long gallery before his house, stopping at each turn by the wooden stand at one end where stood the brass-bound bucket. Doctor Cole, who had just nailed a horseshoe to the windlass by which he had drawn water from the cistern, remained near the gallery, looking at the ground.

A great change had come over the Doctor. His glossy black skin was now rough as if ashes were thrown over him; his white eyes had become yellow, and his teeth dark, and his drooping head hung forward from his shoulders.

"Dook," cried the old Scotchman, stopping and regarding the negro, "what ails ye, mon?"

Cole did not move, but, standing limply, with his eyes still bent upon the ground, he mum-

bled through his closed teeth the word "Conjured!"

"Conjured!" exclaimed the old man. "And who did this to ye, Dook?"

"Marie," muttered the negro, without moving, in the same dogged manner.

"Hoot, mon!" cried Magruder. "Some puir negro lass, I suppose. She couldna hurt ye, mon. The lass hasna done ye ill—she couldna."

Doctor Cole slowly raised his yellow eyes to the old man's face and muttered, "Marie—Vedu queen!"

"Dook," asked old Magruder, looking at the horseshoe on the windlass, "what is that for?"

"Keep conjurer off," said the negro. "But better ting an' dat!" Then throwing aloft his arms he began to chant, and disappeared in the mist singing:

> "De conjurer lib, an' de conjurer trive,
> Till de nigger git a round snake bone!"

"The lad is clean daft!" exclaimed the old Scotchman, looking after his disappearing form. "He may do a harm. I'll just mak' a note of this talk;" and opening his tablets, the old man began to write.

During the conversation a gloved hand had rested on the sill of the parlor window. It was now withdrawn, and immediately the scout stepped

upon the gallery. Bludger had become quite fastidious of late, and invariably wore dark kid gloves.

He seemed to have grown eccentric as well as dainty, for, tripping lightly toward old Magruder, he touched his arm and said, "Senator Frizzle is upon us, with Representative Drizzle and Mr. Stenographer Mizzle—a charming committee. Ha! ha! ha!" And, slapping the old gentleman on the shoulder with his left hand, the scout went laughing to the gate.

Mr. Bludger was become a very whimsical man, and his oddity now was amusing. Scarcely had he ridden five hundred yards when he turned off the causeway into the path leading to the bayou, and rode through the water until he reached a boat turned over in the ooze and labelled "Terror." Hitching his horse, he righted the dug-out, and then—oh, singular aberration!—he killed a snake. It was not a large or venomous viper, but it owned a peculiar head. Seemingly Mr. Bludger prized this sinister-looking head, for he did not bruise it, but cut it off with care and wrapped it in a blood-spotted piece of cloth which he took from his pocket.

The scout's waywardness in this affair was really wonderful. He took the serpent's body into the boat and laid it carefully down, and then he

got in with his queer package and, finding the paddle, pushed down toward the river. What could this singular conduct portend? Obviously something funny, for Mr. Bludger was laughing softly to himself.

Down the river a pile of white-oak splits lay in the water near a dilapidated cabin, and a black pony looked out the window at the pile. When Mr. Bludger saw this, as he came down with the current, he laughed outright. Really the scout's conduct was erratic in the extreme. He ran his boat up to the pile of splits, and deposited this sinister package in the pile. Then he hung the reptile's body across a bough over the splits, and —would you have thought it?—the thing looked, for all the world, like Doctor Cole's horseshoe at the cistern.

After another ebullition of laughter this aberrant gentleman backed his boat into the stream, and with a peculiar bow to Beelzebub, who stood gravely watching the scene from the window, he went on his odd way. Returning to his horse, he upset the boat again—a most unnatural proceeding—and, mounting, rode back to the causeway and to town.

CHAPTER VI.

"The quacks of government, who sate
At th' unregarded helm of state,
And understood this wild confusion
Of fatal madness and delusion."—*Hudibras.*

WHEN the scout reached the county town, he found a number of men standing in the court-house yard. They were summoned before the committee. Entering the hall, he discovered three gentlemen sitting near a table where a fourth was writing down the testimony of Eustace, who occupied the witness-stand. Representative Drizzle, with contemplative eyes and long white locks, as chairman decided the numerous controversies which arose between Mr. Sizzle, the opposition member, and Mr. Frizzle, who was examining the witness.

"Now, sir," said Frizzle, gently arranging a curl which hung gracefully over his expansive brow, "what is your opinion of all this?"

"By education and the effect of Christianity the negro must be made equal to the white man," answered Eustace. "Suffrage is the basis of our gov-

ernment, and its only check against official incompetency or corruption. Ignorant suffrage will be our ruin. If the negro is incapable of receiving this enlightenment, the races should be separated. This has been done with the more unmanageable Indian, and is practicable at less expense with the negro. But you have the most serious of questions to deal with; and in no event should delay and dalliance be allowed to precipitate a conflict costlier than either remedy."

"Pause!" uttered Mr. Frizzle in melodious accent; and raising his finger, he gazed reprovingly at the witness. Eustace paused. Looking about majestically upon his colleagues, Frizzle remarked: "Sir, we ask your opinion of a riot, and you give us a discourse—ah!—on—we know not what—we know not what!"

The senator slowly rubbed his hands together and gazed at the witness, while Senator Sizzle and Representative Drizzle echoed, "We know not what!"

"Direct your remarks exclusively, witness," said Drizzle, looking severely at the stand and swelling out his form with immense dignity, "to what is before you! Give your opinion upon what is before you, sir!"

"Very well," proceeded Eustace, contemplating the committee. "The riot resulted from inequal-

ity of suffrages, like a boil from impure blood; and—"

"Pause!" uttered Frizzle, raising his finger. "We have no desire to penetrate to first causes. Look at the matter before you."

"No, sir!" cried Sizzle, energetically. "State your view, witness, of the present matter, and have no digression. Confine your remarks to what is before you."

"My opinion of what is before me," said Eustace, with his eagle-like glance at the committee, "is that if the people's servants, through negligence, corruption, or political cowardice, fail to grapple with the problems of government, their power will become the property of representatives or masters who have enough force of character to meet the issues."

"What does the man mean?" asked Chairman Drizzle, aghast, as he turned appealingly to his colleagues.

"Isolated manifestations of the race-conflict," continued Eustace, "are not subjects for sectional agitation, nor just factors in Presidential contests. The problem is to remove the friction. This is national in its consequences. If the South is ruined, the whole Union will suffer. Millions of ignorant, incompetent voters constitute the evil. The power which caused the disease should apply the remedy."

"Stand aside, witness!" cried the whole committee together.

"We have enough of this," said Representative Drizzle. "Mr. Stenographer, have you taken down this testimony?"

"Weally," said Mr. Mizzle, a little long-nosed man with huge spectacles, "it seemed so irwelevant that I have not. I waited for instwuctions."

"Quite right, Mizzle; quite right!" exclaimed Senator Sizzle; and gazing after the departing witness, he added: "A most dangerous character! Why, sirs, that man has no conception of the great ends of party. Ha! ha! ha! Better omit his nonsense, Mr. Mizzle."

"By all means leave it out," said the others.

"The negro who showed us his stump of a leg," said Frizzle, gently scratching his curl with his little finger, "was a much more valuable witness."

"You know the white people never fractured his tibia in that way," said Senator Sizzle, firing up.

"But he afforded us a bone," said Drizzle, in a meditative manner—"a bone of contention."

Robert Magruder took Eustace's arm as the latter pressed through the little throng of spectators, and said, "I repeat Eustace to Eustace: 'Why offend those people?'"

"And I answer Magruder with Magruder,"

Wiley replied, laughing, as they stepped out the door, "by saying, 'I felt just as I acted.' England has recovered repeatedly from national maladies by reason of its checks—the crown, the nobility, and grades among the people. We have none of these. Every citizen is here equal in law. Our all is the ballot. It behooves us, therefore, to preserve rigorously the purity of the one and the standard of the other. Political separation seems necessary in order to accomplish these ends in the South. Educating the negro will, I fear, not appease the race-conflict. But a territory may be purchased for the black man where his rights can be secured by constitutional guards; and the committee should ask Congress to propose the requisite amendment. If properly presented, it will be ratified by the States."

"But as I understood," said Magruder, "you told the committee they would be overthrown."

"So they will," answered Eustace. "When once the rulers cease to attain the best ends for the people, a breach of the social compact has resulted, which is sure to alienate the respect of the masses, and the first clever adventurer who engages to govern to better advantage may seize the reins of power without opposition. If Congress were dispersed and the President imprisoned to-morrow, their sole reliance would be the people. At this

time the people would rally to their support. But if we have bad citizens and a fraudulent ballot, worthless representation results: and in that event the people will welcome the adventurer as France did a Napoleon."

After a pause, Magruder remarked, as they approached Eustace's office: "A deputation of negroes headed by the fat citizen informed me this morning that they had nominated me for sheriff. What do you think?"

"The whites will not permit your election," answered Eustace. "I should not run."

"But I shall," said Robert, as he took leave. "The die is cast."

Eustace looked at the young man's fine form as he went off into the falling shadows of night, and then at the members of the committee, who, having finished their investigation, were standing on the court-house steps waiting for the stage-coach; and he sighed as he thought that this young Apollo was risking a better existence than theirs in a vain endeavor to supply their omissions.

CHAPTER VII.

"The eagle, he was lord above,
And Rob was lord below."—*Rob Roy's Grave.*

WEARIED with destroying, the great river has gone within its banks, and is now winding, like a huge serpent, toward the sea. Back-waters are flowing by multiplied bayous into the stream, and the warm sun, breaking through the mist, kisses the vines among the tree-tops that blush with opening flowers. Spring, retarded by the icy current, now comes on apace, and over the ooze which the river is leaving spreads her rich carpeting of green.

A solitary bateau is threading the narrow channels left by the receding water. The superb muscular development and leonine grace which the boatman unconsciously displays can belong only to Robert Magruder. But the young man's brow is sad and his manner watchful. Heedless of the glad melody with which the forest songsters greet the genial day, he seems immersed in care, and every moment glances cautiously around under

the arch-shaped vines and then at a long-barrelled rifle lying near his feet.

A large tree half uprooted and broken leans over the bayou through which the boat is passing; and as the young man gazes keenly at the movent boughs, an eagle rises from the trunk and, circling gracefully in the air, darts with a glad cry of freedom into the very eye of the sun.

Quick as the flight of the imperial bird, the rifle is levelled at its life; but a silvery call arrests the fire, and Robert beholds on the broken stem whence the feathered king has flown the fairy-like form of Marie.

"Oh, Magruder! would you slay my friend?" asks the girl, her great reproachful eyes beaming on him; and her crystal accents drop like tears as she says: "After that morning, Magruder, this was my only companion; and now he is gone."

"Why then did you release the eagle?" asks Robert, for he knows not what to say.

"Because—I cannot tell," Marie answers, gazing into the sky, where now a faint dark spot marks the disappearing bird. "He seemed to me noble and sad; and something told me that I might not longer protect him in his prison."

"How think you thus?" answer the young man's deep firm tones. "Have we not, your people and mine, firmly united and organized? This

special election will place in my hands the county's power. What then fear you, lady?"

"Clouds have settled on my spirit, Magruder," sadly says the beautiful schemer, "and I doubt this appealing to the black men's ignorance. The poor toys—the bear, the cat, the serpent—are gone. My eagle was the last."

"Such toys are better absent," says Robert. "Your people will not desert for that."

"Desert!" cries the girl, and a proud light beams in her almond-shaped eyes. "Why, the poor creatures hold that I am their queen; as you, Magruder, are—Wild Rock!"

The young man starts, and would protest against this announcement; but the dark lady has disappeared. Awhile he stands immersed in thought, and then, with a deep sigh, he bends and sweeps the paddle through the water, and the little boat glides onward.

Floating with the sluggish flow of the backwater, aided by an occasional stroke of his paddle, Robert's boat approaches the place where the scout has been a few days before, and, just as the cabin and split pile come into view, he observes a negro dancing and circling in a most singular way about the latter. The young man is so impressed by these antics that he begins turning to land in order to ask their meaning. But a strong

current strikes the boat; the sun is declining, and Robert has promised to meet his father on the causeway for a ride. He looks at his watch, and sees that but three hours remain for him to visit the fields and direct repairs of the flood's damage. He looks toward the cabin: the negro has disappeared. It is a hard pull now against the stream, for the boat has drifted far, and the young man, after again looking vainly for the negro, ceases his effort and floats down to the gin-field, where his hands are rebuilding a fence.

All is still about Doctor Cole's hut after the boat's passage. One hour, two hours, three, and dusk comes over the scene. Great black clouds fly above, like ill-omened birds. It will be a wild night.

The dwarf comes out of his hovel with a horrible grin, like Caliban from the cave.

"Haw! haw! haw!" laughs the negro.

"Caw! caw! caw!" croaks a crow.

Queer indeed is this Voodoo doctor, making circles on the ground about a pile of white-oak splits. Is that a horseshoe hanging above him? Ha! it is the scout's viper.

> "De conjurer lib, an' de conjurer trive,
> Till ne nigger git a round snake bone!"

Thus grates the dwarf; and like an answer a blood-splashed package rolls down the pile, bursts, and a sinister serpent's head upgazes with glassy eyes.

The black bat night is hovering. The wind wails in the trees. And ever and anon the big moon peeps through a cloud-rift on the ghostlike cypress-knees.

"Belzebub!" grates the dwarf's harsh voice.

The black beast comes forth, his eyes glistening in the moonlight, his cropped ears extended, his red nostrils spread.

The dwarf ties the horse with a hair rope, takes the snake's head and enters the cabin. After a time he emerges, bearing a gun.

Leaping on the horse and flourishing his rusty weapon, the dwarf grates: "Forred, Belzebub!" and digs him in the ribs with his heel. The ugly beast bites and kicks at his rider, and goes off sidewise like a crab. The spectral cypress-knees loom ghostlier. A serpent hisses, an owl hoots, and the crow croaks, "Caw! caw! caw!"

All is still again—still at the cabin, still in the swamp, still out yonder on the causeway, where the fireflies are glittering like starlights in the woods, and the big moon is ever and anon peeping through the cloud-rifts on the white cypress-trees.

What does the big moon see? A white-robed maiden with long wavy hair; a flash brighter than the fireflies, and then—lying on the causeway, looking up at the scurrying clouds, calm, waxlike, beautiful—a dead quadroon girl!

CHAPTER VIII.

"A deed without a name."—*Macbeth.*

RETURNING with his father through a field where ploughmen were working, Robert noticed dark lines among the green—the furrows in the grassy sod; and to amuse the old Scotchman, whose silence and abstraction were greater than usual, he pointed to these and the yellow water beyond, and remarked, "Those bands are beautiful in the evening dusk."

"Ah! Robin Adair," sighed the old man, sadly, "Clan Grigor's bands are scattered. Anither race climbs Ben Lomond's craigs, and rests in the castles by the bonny loch."

He looked into his father's pale face, as they rode on together, and said, with a gentle smile, "The bands made by the ploughshare in the grass, yonder."

"Ah, bairn," said the old Scotchman, "the robber bound the ploughman and carried him off wi' the oxen."

Determined to surprise the old man into an exercise of memory about the near past, Robert

selected an oak beside the causeway, and firing his rifle, scattered the bark in all directions.

"That shot was as good," he said, laughing, when his father approached and examined the tree, "as the forester's at Kooper's Well."

"Well?" said the old Scotchman, with a vacant stare; and then drawing out his tablets, he turned the leaves nervously. Presently his face brightened, and he cried, "Ah! I hae the well. Puir lassie! Doc is clean daft. He will do a harm, Robin —a great harm."

Robert abandoned the hopeless effort to arouse his father's memory of recent events, and they rode on silently for a long time. Lopping off a limb will sometimes make a tree more vigorous: and partial loss of the reproductive faculty rendered the old man's perception strong for his age. He was looking at the fireflies which spangled the darkness as they rode along the causeway, when their horses suddenly stopped. Old Magruder, pointing to a white object which shone as the moonlight flashed out from behind a scudding cloud, exclaimed in a startled tone, "Robin, bairn, what is yon?"

The young man dismounted, and tried to lead his horse toward the object; but the animal rebelled. He then placed the rein in his father's hand, and walked to the white heap in the road.

Another cloud obscured the light, and he was bending over the object, when the moon again flashed out and disclosed the pale, beautiful features of Marie. She lay calm as a waxen image, her long hair damp with dew across her breast, and her dark eyes, now blank and expressionless, gazing up at the scudding clouds.

Old Magruder was again sunk in abstraction, when Robert, taking the girl's head in his lap, looked up, fearing to find him injured by the awful spectacle; and the young man, relieved of this anxiety, began considering what course he should pursue. Leave the poor woman there until he could ride with his father to their home? This was impossible. Some wild beast might devour her. But could he trust the old man's memory of the road to his residence? Ha! Mameluke would go home if left to himself, and would lead the other horse as he had led Frogg's back. But what would Laura surmise? for old Magruder would never remember enough to inform her. Ah! Another thought came to Robert, and he began to act.

Taking a leaf from his note-book, and hastily pencilling directions to Laura to send aid, he pinned this to the lapel of his father's coat, and then tying the bridle of the old man's horse to Mameluke's crupper, he gave the signal, "Go!" Away went the trained animal, leading the other; and the

young man sat down upon the causeway, and pillowed on his breast the dead girl's head.

"Poor child!" he said, "is this the end of all your plans?" Then grasping at a straw of hope, he laid his hand upon her heart. It had ceased to beat. "Oh! little Marie," he sorrowfully murmured, "your short life has been sad—so sad!"

Erelong his rifle leaning against a tree attracted his attention, and he reached forth his arm to take the piece, intending to load it. At this moment a harsh voice cried, "Stop! I arrest you for murder!"

Looking up, Robert saw the scout standing over him, accompanied by Jinks and Tock. All three held their guns pointed at his head.

"What means this, sirs?" exclaimed the young man, rising and confronting them, with an air of haughty inquiry. "Dare ye accuse me of Marie's death?"

"By St. George! the circumstances are at least suspicious," sneered Bludger, examining the rifle, which he had seized. "You are found here, alone with the murdered woman, and your gun recently discharged!"

"But my character!" cried Robert.

"To preserve it the motive," said the scout, glancing at his companions.

Magruder's leonine face gleamed, and his grand

form expanded to its full height. "Enough of this!" he cried. "Here!" (to Tock and Jinks) "precede us to the county town."

Captain Tock and Colonel Jinks, obeying, set off in advance.

"Now, sir!" said Robert to the scout, "I am your prisoner. Walk before me!"

Unable to resist the command, the scout followed his companions, and Robert brought up the rear, carrying the young girl's corse. In this singular order the procession entered the town, where Marie's body was delivered to the fat citizen and Clinch, and Robert was incarcerated.

Immediately on reaching his cell, the young man sent for Eustace; and this gentleman entered the low door a few moments after, rather dazed by the appearance of affairs.

"Why, Magruder, what on earth have you been doing?" he cried, gazing at Robert's shirt-bosom, which was covered with blood.

The turnkey lingered at the cell-door, gaping with apparent horror at the sight; and Robert, observing the man's looks, began for the first time to appreciate the gravity of his position.

"Shut the door!" said Eustace, quietly. The man obeyed.

"Now, Robert, tell me all about this; everything, I charge you!"

Thus adjured, the young man narrated all the circumstances connected with his ride, the finding of the body, and the arrest. As he proceeded, a look of uneasiness which Eustace wore on entering gave place to a smile, and at the conclusion of the narrative he laughingly said, "Well, Magruder, the charge is easily disproved; but Bludger has probably treated you to a hard bed for one night."

"Ha!" he cried, a moment later, in manifest alarm, "is not your father's memory defective?"

"Yes," answered Robert, looking in wonder at the lawyer, who was beating upon the cell-door; "but what has that to do with this matter?"

"Don't you see?" cried Eustace, still pounding away. "He is your only witness! Ho! there, jailer! Quick!"

The sleepy turnkey slowly unlocked the rusty cell-door, and then consumed an age, as it seemed to Eustace, unbarring the jail-entrance. At last he stepped out into the night-air, along with the lawyer.

"Tough case!" ventured the turnkey, as they made their exit.

Eustace looked at the man a moment; then he said, handing some money, "Get Mr. Magruder a good supper. They have made an absurd mistake."

"The county furnishes—" began the man; but

finding that he was addressing his information to the vacant night, he turned about muttering Bludger's name, and walked back into the jail.

A few moments after, the clattering hoofs of Wiley Eustace's horse were heard upon the causeway. The lawyer's head was busy during his rapid ride, and when the lights of old Magruder's house shone in the darkness he was ready to make a vigorous effort to preserve the essential evidence.

CHAPTER IX.

"O love, despatch all business, and be gone."
The Merchant of Venice.

LAURA met Eustace on the gallery, and conducted him, at his request, to her father, who was in his library—a long narrow room lined with shelves of books. When Wiley Eustace entered, the elderly gentleman was sitting near a large table, engaged in the amusement of pulling Bracken's ears, and the dog, who seemed to enjoy the fun, was playfully defending his organs of hearing by striking like a bear with his paws.

"Ah! Meister Eustace, coom in, coom in!" cried the Scotchman, cheerily. "Bracken and I are joost having ane sma' play."

The lawyer drew a chair to the table and, standing with his hand resting on its high back, remarked, "Robert's message was received, no doubt, and you sent the assistance."

"Father returned home, with a note on his coat," said Laura, smiling, as she stood at the door. "I sent two of the negroes who happened to be here at the time, and every moment I look for

their return. What did he want with assistance, Mr. Eustace?"

"Some person had fallen on the causeway," answered the lawyer, without looking at the lady. "Will Miss Laura oblige us by ascertaining if her messengers have returned?"

"In other words," said she, laughing, and closing the door as she retired, "you would like to discuss your business alone. Good-night."

Eustace now looked at the old man for a time, and then said abruptly, "Where is your son?"

"What! Robin Adair?" queried Magruder. "Oh, he's aboot—somewhere aboot the hoose."

"He is in jail!" said Eustace, solemnly.

"Ha! ha! ha!" laughed the old gentleman. "Ye'r a good joker, Meister Eustace; a vera funny mon. Ha! ha! ha!"

The lawyer's vexed face showed the failure of this attack. But his art was to sift men's minds; and like a good tactician, when defeated in the assault, he now began a regular siege.

Seating himself in the chair, he considered, while he looked at the aged Scotchman's vacant face, how to bring back to his mind the scene upon the causeway.

"You and Robert were in the field this evening," he ventured, beginning at the opening of their ride home.

"Vera like, vera like. I dinna mind," answered Magruder, abstractedly gazing at a favorite volume which lay open on the table. "John Ruskin is ane great mon, Meister Eustace; ane great mon!"

"The devil fly away with Ruskin!" muttered the lawyer, impatiently; and then he added, trying the other end of the ride, "Mameluke led you home all right."

"Ah! Meister Eustace, ane great body o' men. When I was a bairn—"

"I speak of your son's horse," said Eustace, abruptly.

"Admirable horse they were," continued the old gentleman, gazing with complacence in the air; "ane charge they made at the Pyramids—"

"Mr. Magruder," interrupted the lawyer, "I wish to converse with you on matters of importance—things vitally affecting yourself."

"Ah!" said the poor old man, looking timidly around. "Would anything injure me?"

"No," answered the lawyer; "but—" He paused, for he was wholly at a loss how to proceed, and smiling, murmured, "*A tort et à travers.*" Then, thoughtfully, he dropped his eyes.

Eustace looked at the floor. The aged Scotchman sat gazing abstractedly into vacancy. The silence was unbroken save by the steady breathing of the

dog that now slept by its master's chair. Viewing the bearings of his position, the lawyer thought once of calling Laura, but a moment's consideration convinced him that his daughter's appearance would probably start a train of ideas that would lead the old gentleman's mind further than the Pyramids from the subject that he wished to reach.

One peculiarity of their conversation had impressed the lawyer. He noticed that Magruder caught at words rather than things. When this recurred to his thoughts, he was about adopting the dangerous expedient of describing the scene to the old Scotchman and asking him if he remembered it. Half smiling at the picture of a cross-examination which occurred to him, he muttered, "He would give me as his source of information," and abandoned this course. It remained to try the effect of verbal sounds.

The lawyer remembered two or three expressions used by Robert in his narrative at the jail, and, raising his eyes from the floor, he returned to the last charge. He arose and walked to a window, and looked out. The old gentleman's eyes followed his movements.

"Puir lassie!" said the lawyer. "Dook wi' do her a harm. He is clean daft."

"Hoot, mon; hoot, mon!" exclaimed his compan-

ion, fumbling uneasily for his tablets. "The well, the cistern. Hoot, mon!"

Eustace could feel the beating of his pulse, but his voice was reasonably steady as he uttered, "Puir lassie! All a white heap in the causeway. Robin, bairn, what is yon?"

"Hoot, mon! the tablets. I mind, I mind!" cried the old Scotchman. "Let me write it down."

The lawyer, trembling with suppressed excitement, drew the ivory book from the old man's pocket and placed it before him, and then, his memory now thoroughly aroused, Magruder wrote down a striking summary of the scene which occured upon the causeway earlier in the night.

Looking over his shoulder, the lawyer saw the last word written, and then he breathed a sigh of relief. He then sat down, and questioned the aged gentleman about the occurrences; and Magruder, referring from time to time, after a pause, to his tablets in order to start his sluggish memory, gave a lucid description of the shot at the tree and the subsequent finding of Marie's body.

He was still repeating his questions, and gradually approaching the arrest, in order at once to break to the father the news of the accusation against his son and to impress the incidents more deeply on his memory, when the door opened, and Laura, entering, very pale, said, "The messengers

have returned, Mr. Eustace. Will you come here?"

Eustace arose, and looking at old Magruder's face, he was pained to see intelligence fading from it like a dying lamp in a lantern, leaving only blank abstraction behind. With a sigh, the lawyer turned to the young lady, and together they walked out upon the gallery.

"Oh, Eustace," she said, "what is this about my brother?"

"Some of Bludger's machinations," answered her companion. "He charges your brother with killing Marie; but your father knows that Robert was a mile away when the murder was committed."

Tears started in Laura's blue eyes, and, clasping her hands, she exclaimed, "Dearest brother, I knew you were innocent!"

They sat down together on the steps. For a long time the silence was unbroken. Then Eustace raised the gentle girl's hand and pressed it to his lips.

"Oh, Eustace," she murmured, "how glad I am that you are here to defend brother! Lately people have treated me so singularly. Even Bessie Cecil has grown cold as an icicle. I should fear the trial in a strange lawyer's hands."

"Imagination, Laura," answered the young man, gently. "The shock has unstrung your nerves.

Robert's defence is easy, unless your father's memory—"

Eustace stopped abruptly. Admonished by the girl's sudden start, he felt that he was exposing his case, and a vague feeling of uneasiness took possession of his mind.

"What of his memory?" eagerly asked Laura, gazing wistfully into Wiley's face. "Tell me, Eustace; I may be able to help."

"Well, do this," said the lawyer, smiling: "say nothing to any one, and see that your father keeps his tablets as usual, but safe."

"And now good-night, my dearest," he said, rising and taking the girl's cold hand. "Robert expects my return."

"O love, be gone!" murmured the lady. "Keep not my brother in suspense."

The young man bent forward and kissed her pale brow, and then he turned and went out from the light of the swinging lamp, bearing into the darkness all of Laura's hopes.

CHAPTER X.

"Here shall the Press the People's right maintain,
Unawed by influence and unbribed by gain."

Life of Story.

RUMOR travels in the country with lightning-like rapidity. City-dwellers engrossed in business or pleasure, unaware till the newspapers inform them that a house has fallen in the next block, have little idea of the avidity with which a rustic population seize every incident that varies the monotony.

A beautiful spring morning succeeded the night last described. A sky of limitless blue was redolent with the perfumes of a budding year and alive with the glad music of its songsters. Brooks murmured, soft winds whispered, and the young leaves trembled in the balmy air.

On such a day as this an awful report began spreading through the country where our scene is laid. It was bruited here and there, with numberless whispered additions, that Robert Magruder had killed Marie.

This flaming-tongued dragon of a rumor went flying about over the fields, into the houses, whispering here into the blush-tinted ear of a

maiden, and there crying before a rugged farmer's face, growing bigger and uglier as it flew.

John Frogg sat within the walls of the Empire City. One eye glared in stern resolve at a keg of apple-brandy, and the other followed the rotund form of Madam Frogg with a benign superior glance. Clipped papers lay as ruins about the editor's stool; the shears in his hand gleamed falchion-like. Beholding her husband in his glory, the good lady might have thought of Marius amid the fallen towers of Carthage.

"Be gorrah!" said he, "this is a bastely charge on young Magruther."

"Baseless is the charge, Froggie darling," said his wife, "'as the unsubstantial fabric of a dream.' And such a good young man! really one of the auncion regame."

"Faix, an' didn't he give me a lift in the matter o' hunting deer?" asked the little editor, in a tone of indignant remonstrance; and glancing about the room, he appealed to an imaginary audience. "Do yez think, ye crathurs, that a gintilmin of Oirish dascint will iver deserht a frind? The *Black Crow* shall defind the young man."

The good lady gazed in unutterable delight at her valiant husband, whose words she was drinking in, and then waddling up to the little man, she patted him on the back, and cried, "Good! my darling

hubbie. 'But screw your courage to the sticking-place, and we'll not fail.' By my hallidome! the folly of the accusation will break it down."

"Only let me get at 'em, be gorrah!" cried the little editor, leaping from his perch and assuming an attitude of attack. "The iditor of the *Crow* will show 'em a thing or two!"

"Hubbie," said Mrs. Frogg, after a meditative pause, "let's set up an article in defence of the young man."

"Come along, thin, wid ye, me gurrul," cried the little man; and putting their heads together, the worthy couple began to compose a laudation of Robert, setting the type as they agreed on the sentences.

They were still so engaged, and had half a column in type, when the form of Bludger entered the door. An ominous scowl marked his hard features, and in sharp peremptory tones he asked, "Have you heard of the Magruder murder?"

"Sure, thin, ye mane the killin' o' the nagur?" queried the editor, looking up from his type.

The scout frowned, and Frogg's limber legs bent under him with alarm.

"I mean," said Bludger, sternly, "the foul murder done by Robert Magruder."

"Sure, sir," pleaded the editor, "he did not the crime."

"He is guilty!" cried the scout, his face burning with rage. "By St. George, I say he is guilty!"

"By my hallidome, I don't believe you!" cried Madam Frogg's shrill voice.

"By the same token, naither do I!" cried the editor, plucking up spirit.

"Yes, you do, sir," said Bludger, turning upon Frogg with a menacing frown. "Know you this?" And he made the mystic sign.

"Ochoon, ochoon!" wailed the Irishman, "Sure, thin, ye be afther murthering the poor young man."

"Here, sir!" commanded the scout, beckoning him aside, "insert this article in your little sheet. It is ordered. Do you hear?"

The last inquiry seemed pertinent, for Frogg was seemingly bereft of reason. Gazing hopelessly toward his wife, he took the manuscript, but it fell from his nerveless hand.

Bludger now turned from him, and approaching the fat lady with a bland smile, he said: "Madam, I have just handed your husband an editorial for the good cause. Of course I should not dare insult you by offering compensation. It is reasonable, however, that you should have the work which we can bestow, and I am happy to state that your husband's paper was to-day selected as the county journal. Here are ten public notices. Present the bills to the treasurer."

Waving his hand the scout departed, and the estimable pair stood gazing at each other. Directly they put their heads together again and began reading the manuscript which he left.

"Hubbie," said she, when they finished reading, "I fear Robert Magruder is a very bad man."

"Be gorrah! me gurrul, he is," cried Frogg. "Didn't he dump your husband in the bayou an' lave him to die intirely?"

This excellent couple gazed fondly at each other and smiled.

"By my hallidome! 'twere pity, an 'pity 'twere 'twere true' to disappoint so good a man as Colonel Bludger," said the lady, musingly.

The editor abstractedly dropped his hand upon the unsupported half-column of type and pied it.

"Oh! Froggie, you've spoiled our article," said she, looking curiously at her husband.

"Faix, it's a pity, thin," observed the editor, thoughtfully regarding the heap of confusion; and fixing an eye on the old Dutch clock, he exclaimed, "Barely time to git out the paper, me gurrul! We must use the scout's piece."

Wiley Eustace was surprised to read in the next issue of the *Big Black Crow* a leader which, purporting to exculpate Robert, was artfully contrived to throw great suspicion upon his case, and even sought to criminate the lawyer who defended him.

CHAPTER XI.

"A poor, infirm, weak, and despised old man."—*King Lear.*

IF the scout's character was marred by faults, want of audacity was not among them. Leaving the wharf-boat, he rode immediately to Magruder's house, intending to assay the bold expedient of persuading a father that his son was guilty. The old Scotchman sat in his wonted place upon the gallery, with the Newfoundland dog by his chair, and a look of painful abstraction on his wan features indicated that a sad subject flowing from his memory had left its sediment of vague unrest.

The scout entered the house with a sympathetic tread like an ugly spider approaching a careless fly, and grasping the trembling palm extended by the old Scotchman, gave a gentle commiserative pressure.

"Sorrow, Magruder, is the lot of all," he said insinuatingly, as they sat down, "and it is doubly painful when coming through our children."

Bludger paused, and looked at his victim out of the corner of his eye. The old man only sat nurs-

ing his knee and gazing into vacancy. "Ah, ha!" thought the blue-bottle spider, "I'll weave another strand to my web."

"Often, how often! have I warned Robert against his connection with Marie," said he, elevating his eyes and drawing down the corners of his mouth; "but he was infatuated."

"Hoolie! Bludger! what clishmaclaver?" cried old Magruder, moving uneasily in his seat, and putting back with his pale shrivelled hand the scattered strands of silver hair.

The scout drew his chair nearer, and in a low confidential tone proceeded: "For months, ever since Robert killed Wild Rock—"

"Hech, man! what mean ye?" exclaimed the old Scotchman, drawing away; "my bairn niver killed Wild Rock!"

The scout elevated his eyebrows, the very picture of polite surprise, and, with a shrug of his shoulders, proceeded: "Robert is too reticent with his friends, Mr. Magruder; and since he stuffed the ballot-box he has been more uncommunicative than usual."

"Dan Bludger, ye do Robin wrang," said the old man; "the bairn didna these things."

"At all events, they were not discovered," answered the scout, carelessly; "but he will have a serious time for killing this girl."

"Oh! Bludger, man, he didna, my brave Robin Adair! He couldna, he couldna!" and the old father bowed his feeble head and wept.

The scout looked at the poor old man with a face curiously blending pity and scorn; then bending over he whispered in his ear, "They say he wished to hide their intimacy."

The fly started as he felt the spider's sting. Moaning, the old man rose and tottered into the house.

Bludger was looking after the retreating form with a rueful sneer, when Laura appeared at a window, and, to his surprise, beckoned him to approach.

Entering the room opposite the parlor, he found himself in the lady's boudoir. This apartment, which was arranged by Laura, exhibited at once her taste and limited means.

Over the broad fireplace, now filled with cedar-boughs intertwined with budding vines, was an oak mantelpiece on which rested two vases holding early flowers. A bronze clock, whose running days were over, was placed between the vases under an oval glass globe; and the lady had adorned this wreck of time with green feathers and a bird of paradise which she found among some of her mother's head-dresses, until it presented a really beautiful appearance. The furniture consisted of

family heirlooms. Yonder high Elizabethan chair obviously once belonged to the prim old lady with the stiff ruff hanging over the mantel, and this Queen Anne here was certainly the resting-place of the genial little woman who smiles from the canvas by the door. The rosewood escritoire may have belonged to the scholarly-looking man whose portrait hangs near yon window; and the targe and broadsword so deftly arranged upon this wall were wielded, beyond doubt, by the florid ancestor who struts here in tartan and plaid. Everything in the room has a character. Even this little rocking-chair and the work-basket—don't we know at a glance that these are the especial property of the gentle blue-eyed lady who stands yonder on the matting with her peculiar timid dignity receiving the scout? Ah! bonnie Annie Laurie, we are happy to be allowed to enter thy room even in company with this ugly Bludger, who now awaits looking at thee in awkward expectation.

"Captain Bludger," said Laura, approaching the scout, "my brother is to be tried on a false accusation."

"Umph!" muttered the man, turning up his eyes and touching the tips of his fingers together.

"Is my father intelligent?" she asked earnestly, touching his arm with her extended hand.

Bludger glanced at the lady in a puzzled way,

unable to fathom her motive. "How should I know?" he cautiously asked.

"You have this moment talked with him," said the girl. "Did he not understand your conversation?"

"Apparently he did," after a pause answered the scout, determined to see where this would lead.

"He knows that Robert is innocent!" exclaimed Laura, with a triumphant smile.

"The devil!" muttered Bludger to himself; and his countenance changed as if a mask of cunning had slipped over his face. Smiling blandly at the girl, he asked, "What service can I do Robert, Miss Laura, with this valuable information?"

A door, now closed by a rolling blind, opened into a flower-garden next to this room, and here Laura cultivated the vines and roses which withstand the mild winter of this semi-tropical clime. In the centre of this garden an arbor was densely covered by four musk-rose climbers, and two rustic benches were under its shade.

Throwing open the blind, Laura beckoned the scout, who with an expectant expression followed her into the garden. She led him to the arbor, and seating him beside her on one of the benches, smilingly exclaimed, "Captain Bludger, I hear you are pressing this persecution of my brother, and I want you for my sake to stop the charge, which you now know is false."

"By St. George!" cried the scout, looking at the girl with a frown, "Wiley Eustace has a queer way of trying his cases."

"What do you mean?" she exclaimed, drawing haughtily back; "Mr. Eustace never asked me to speak to you."

"Unless he told you," asked Bludger, with a smile of incredulity, "how did you learn that I am district attorney?"

"District attorney!" said Laura, wonderingly. "Why, I thought Mr. Melon was district attorney."

"True," answered the scout, watching the effect of his words; "but he is sick, and requested me to act in his stead."

Oh, Bludger, Bludger! The truth was that Melon was inordinately lazy, and the scout had written representing that a laborious murder-case was for trial, and asking the attorney to permit him to act for the State; but the official had not yet replied to the letter.

After a pause the girl leaned toward him; and raising her blue eyes pleadingly, she said, "Will you not grant my request?"

Bludger's arm rested on the back of the bench. Dropping it around the lady's waist, he drew her to him, whispering, "Anything you ask, my darling, if you will let me—"

"Hush! What mean you, sir?" cried Laura, struggling from his grasp.

She walked rapidly toward the house, and Bludger, after a moment's pause, pursued with flushed face.

"Laura, stop!" he cried in a hoarse whisper, "you do not know me. Stop!"

Hearing his rapidly pursuing step, the lady ran. The scout, his face flaming red, came after. She entered the door by the open blind, and he followed. But as his foot crossed the threshold he was stopped by a savage growl, and Bracken stood in the door.

The Newfoundland was a dangerous-looking creature with his bristling hair and sharp teeth; and the scout, unwilling to encounter his attack, turned off and walked toward a side gate which opened into the front yard. He paused once, but was started by a menacing growl at his heels, and looking around he saw the dog's angry eyes and grinning mouth. "Confound the brute!" he muttered, and quickening his pace he went to the horse-rack. Here stood Bracken again, obviously intending to bid him adieu, for at every symptom of delay the dog uttered his savage growl; and with an oath Bludger mounted his strong sorrel horse and rode toward the causeway.

CHAPTER XII.

"The charge is prepared, the lawyers are met,
The judges all ranged; a terrible show!"
The Beggar's Opera.

ENTERING the town, Bludger stopped his horse in front of the Gum-Tree Hotel. This edifice faced Court Square, and was embellished with the customary veranda. A raw-boned, sleepy-looking individual sat astraddle the leather bottom of a hickory chair, engaged in the intellectual occupation of carving a head on its back. Hitching his horse to a swinging bough of the large sapling from which the house took its name, the scout stepped on the gallery and stood watching the proprietor; for such was the carver in wood, adorning his hotel furniture.

"When you finish cutting that Indian idol," said Bludger, at last, "let me know if the judge has arrived."

The proprietor looked lazily up, still holding his one-bladed knife on the chair-back, and remarked, "This is a lion's head, Cap'n Bludger, and the jedge is in his apartment."

"Jack Jousin," said the scout, making his peculiar sign, "you must get on the Magruder case jury. Do you understand?"

Mr. Jousin returned the mystic signal, and Bludger passed in and went to the judge's room.

The expounder of law, when found, was arrayed in a suit of soft white cotton cloth; his shoes, tied with raw-hide strings, were of home-tanned leather, and his coarse straw hat lay upon the bed on which he was sitting. He was a meagre little man, with light blue eyes; and his long hair was hardly whiter than his bloodless face. Extending a skinny hand to the scout, he cried, "Evening, Cap'n Bludger; what's on for the term?"

"Magruder's case comes up first to-morrow," answered the scout; "I called to see you about this trial. The family, who are very influential, have fixed up an *alibi*, and this fellow Eustace is to represent them."

"Ah! Take a seat, Cap'n Bludger," said the judge, dropping into a chair. "Bad man, that Eustace, very bad! very bad! Just read an article in your county journal about this case. Can't we head the rascals—head the rascals, eh?" and the little judge took a pinch of imaginary snuff and gazed inquiringly at his auditor.

"Have some tobacco," said the scout, extending a neat box of fine-cut. "I have no snuff, but—"

"Ah! Thanks. No; I never use tobacco. Never snuff, never smoke. Have ceased for fifteen years," said the judge; and then looking longingly at the box, he took it in his hand, and said, "Ah! beautiful box!" Smelling the contents, he added, "Ah! delightful aroma! You have no idea how I should like to partake. But my resolve! I'm a firm man, Cap'n Bludger, a firm man!" and the little judge leaned back in his chair, tapping the box affectionately.

"As to heading the rascals," said the scout, recurring to the case, for he had often gone through this comedy of the snuff-box before and knew where it would end, "that rests with your honor, for they have stuffed old Magruder, who, as you know, is imbecile, to testify to the pretended facts."

"What! what!" cried the little judge, abstractedly taking a pinch of the tobacco and holding it to his nose, "the old Scotchman with whom I dined last term? A mere lunatic, sir; a raving maniac! Ah!" and taking a prolonged sniff, the judge uttered an exclamation of satisfaction.

"No objection to smoking?" asked Bludger, producing his pipe.

"Ah! none whatever, none whatever!" cried the little man, eying the meerschaum enviously. "Never smoke myself, but like the aroma, the aroma."

The scout lighted the pipe, and the curls of tobacco-smoke began to ascend.

"Oh! Ah!" exclaimed the little judge. "Smoke me, smoke me, Bludger;" and drawing his chair close to the scout, the latter commenced puffing into the judge's face great volumes of fumid breath.

"Oh! Ah! He!" half exclaimed the little man. And then he muttered dreamily, with closed eyes, "Charming, my friend; oh, how delightful, how charming!"

"The old Scotchman is not crazy, but he is imbecile," said the scout, between the whiffs; "a case of senile dementia, perhaps."

"Ah, yes! Senile dementia—don't stop—how delightful! Imbecile—puff, Bludger; smoke me, smoke me. Ah! ah! How charming!" and the little judge leaned back in ecstasy.

The scout now took leave, forgetting his tobacco-box; and descending the stairs, began a prolonged interview with Mr. Jack Jousin, the proprietor. This worthy left the hotel an hour after, and so important was his mission that the sun was rising on the day of the trial when he re-entered the house accompanied by the seven men of the ceiled room.

Groups in the court-room were discussing the crops, the price of cotton, and the coming trial,

when the little judge trotted in, with a green cotton umbrella trailing behind him. "Mornin', gentlemen, mornin'!" he cried, and bustling up to the bench, leaned over on his elbows. "Call docket!" he said to the clerk, who responded by shouting, "State *versus* Robert Magruder."

"Bring in prisoner," said the judge.

At this moment a vehicle rolled up to the court-house door, and Laura, leaving in it her father, entered the room on Eustace's arm. She was very pale; traces of tears were on her face. Her long, dark lashes drooped over her blue eyes, and the golden ringlets hung almost neglected about her sad features. Placing her chair near that kept for the accused, Eustace sat down beside the girl.

Robert now came into the court, guarded by two bailiffs. His tall muscular form towered above his guards. The frank and ingenuous expression of his clear blue eye met calmly the stare of the crowd. His fair hair was thrown back from his broad open brow, and his complexion, as fine as a woman's, was now heightened by a slight flush. A pensive and somewhat satirical smile communicated to his firm, handsome lips a striking attraction, and an unconscious inclination of his head forward, characteristic of his vigorous nature, added to the grace of his splendid carriage.

Amidst a murmur of involuntary admiration, the young man sat down by his sister and smilingly pressed her hand. The trial then proceeded.

While the preliminaries were being arranged, Robert looked over the room, and taking a paper from his pocket, asked Eustace in a low tone, "How many of the names on this list can you strike off absolutely and without assigning a reason?"

"Twelve," answered the lawyer. "Is that enough?"

"No," said Robert; "unless you can eliminate the first thirty, one will do as well as another."

"Umph!" muttered Eustace, "so much for the loss of the jury-box."

"The first twelve names were called, and a peculiar smile passed over the prisoner's face as they took their seats—a smile which their eyes avoided. Seven of the twelve were the men of the ceiled room, and Jack Jousin was foreman.

After this jury was sworn, Robert leaned back in his chair and seemed to take little further interest in the proceedings. Bludger, who represented the State, introduced Captain Tock to prove the fact of Marie's murder; but this youth, in his mild manner, gazing languidly toward Laura, said, "Puty gul in road—might be dead—might not—can't say."

"Stand aside!" said Bludger, roughly, to the witness. "Bailiff, call Colonel Jinks."

The Colonel did not need a call, but bustled into the witness-stand, and tapping his top-boots with a riding-whip, looked fiercely over the audience.

"Now, Colonel," said the scout, blandly, "tell the jury all you know of this girl's death—how and where it occurred."

"Impossible!" said the Colonel, glancing kindly at Laura; then he added, addressing Bludger, "I do not know that it ever occurred."

A titter ran through the court-room, breaking the solemnity of the trial. Bludger endeavored to argue the witness into a direct statement of Marie's death, but he was stopped by an objection from Eustace. The fact was that both Jinks and Tock, when ordered to walk before Robert into town, had not observed in the darkness whether the girl was alive or dead, and no subsequent opportunity was presented for ascertaining. An abrupt conclusion was thus likely to be put to the trial, by the total failure of the State to prove the two essentials which lawyers call the *venue* and *corpus delicti;* that is, that the crime had been committed and within the jurisdiction of the court.

A number of persons in the court-room could have enlightened the jury on one point, for they had attended Marie's funeral; but they were

negroes, and, thoroughly satisfied of the prisoner's innocence, they had no disposition to volunteer evidence.

After an awkward pause, Bludger arose, and approaching the little judge, began a whispered conversation. Presently he turned and, throwing up his hand, said, "Mr. Clerk, swear me!"

The scout was red when he faced the jury, and Eustace's smile of quiet surprise did not help to allay his annoyance. He proceeded, however, and testified to the circumstances of the finding of Marie's body on the causeway in this county.

The foundation of the case was now laid; but he saw that the empty gun, and other facts on which he had descanted, failed to impress, and that he could not rely on these for a verdict even from his own jury. In short, he became aware that he must have stronger evidence to connect the accused with the murder.

Bludger had committed the error of fixing the mill without preparing the grist for the hopper. He had judge and jury with him, but not enough testimony. Looking anxiously at the clock over the judge's stand, he suggested an adjournment for dinner. It was only eleven, and Eustace protested that this was a mere pretext to gain time to fish for witnesses; but the little judge said, "The State seems embarrassed," and ordered a recess until afternoon.

When they were leaving the court-room, Eustace called Swain and asked if General Griggles was in town. Receiving a response that he had just stopped at the hotel with his partner, the lawyer walked over there. A messenger came to the office soon after, and gave Swain a note requesting him to bring to the General's room the record in an important chancery appeal.

CHAPTER XIII.

"For twelve honest men have decided the cause;
Who are judges alike of the facts and the laws."

The Honest Jury.

AT three o'clock Eustace entered the court-room with General Griggles and his partner. Bludger was standing by a window, in low-toned conversation with the judge. The jury were seated; and Robert leaned lightly on a hand which rested upon the back of his chair, regarding these men with the peculiar satirical smile which their eyes avoided. Laura, bending forward in rapt attention, awaited the resumption of her brother's trial.

"Here, General, is Miss Laura," said Eustace, approaching with his companions. Turning to the General's partner, he added: "Mr. Shaw, let me present you to Miss Magruder."

The two gentlemen sat down by Laura and began to converse; but the judge taking his seat, they turned their attention to the trial. A marked change was now observable in the scout's demeanor. Rising, with a look of confidence, he

said in harsh, aggressive tones, "Call Doctor Cole, the *late* carriage-driver."

While Doc was shuffling to the witness-stand, Laura leaned over and whispered in Eustace's ear. He answered by a slight nod; and without turning his eyes, which were fixed upon the negro, he noted his every movement.

The doctor's aspect was not pleasing. Superadded to bewitchedness was now a wild look of affright, as if some ever present dread was haunting the man. With wavering eyes, furtively glancing about, he gave his testimony brokenly in reply to Bludger's questions.

He swore that, being in the swamp on the night of the murder, he saw the prisoner raise his gun and shoot; and that immediately Marie threw up her arms and fell. The effect of this evidence was great. As the negro ceased, that peculiar sigh which accompanies so often in a court-room the unpleasant termination of an interval of suspense broke from the audience; and the jurors, no longer avoiding the prisoner's eye, looked at him frowningly. Conviction was inevitable unless this testimony was overcome.

Eustace, leaning slightly forward, asked in a quiet tone, "Why did you leave Magruder's service?"

"What does this mean?" cried Bludger, leaping to his feet.

"I wish to show," answered Eustace, "that the witness—"

"Stop!" cried Bludger. "I object to this most unusual proceeding. Let the jury retire."

"Yes," cried the little judge, "most unusual indeed! Retire, gentlemen; by all means, retire."

The jury was conducted to an adjoining room, and Eustace, rising, stated that he proposed to show that the witness was discharged because he had become unsound in mind by dwelling on the idea that Marie had conjured him, and that his testimony was in the line of his delusion and entitled to little if any weight.

"Competency question for court," cried the little judge, anticipating Bludger, who was about to reply. "Court holds witness competent."

"Your honor will oblige me by noting an exception," said Eustace, urbanely.

"Ha! Ah! What!" cried the little judge, getting very red. "Except, do you? Well, except! Yes! The last refuge of a bad case is except. Oh, these frivolous exceptions!"

While the judge was speaking, Eustace leaned back and whispered to Swain, who began writing as if his own life was at stake; and when the address from the bench was concluded he handed Eustace a sheet of legal cap well filled. The lawyer made a slight change and returned the paper to

Swain, who soon handed him a fair copy. This Eustace gave to Griggles, who read it with Shaw; and both nodded.

"What are we waiting for?" cried the little judge, impatiently moving about. "Bring in the jury, quick!"

Eustace handed the paper to Bludger, who read it and was putting it in his pocket.

"Pardon me, dear sir," said Eustace smiling, and extending his hand, "I want that paper."

"By George! sir, I have not had time to read the thing," cried the scout, angrily; "and here is the jury."

"The paper, if you please," said Eustace, with his hand still extended. "It is my property."

"Now, by St. George!" cried the scout, springing to his feet and shaking his great red fist in Eustace's face, "this is infamous, infamous!"

Eustace raised his hand deprecatingly, and quietly said, "I have a copy, if you refuse to return the original."

Without answering, the scout turned to the judge and stated that he had many objections to the draft of the exception proposed by adverse counsel, which he would make known during the term.

Eustace now took from Swain another copy which the young man had made, and handing it to the judge, remarked: "Your honor understands

that every exception taken during the trial must be settled and allowed before the jury retires from the bar."

"Must!" cried the fuming little judge, taking the paper and putting it in his pocket. "Must! Ah! Ho! He! Let this trial proceed! Are we to do nothing else at this term but note frivolous exceptions? Ah!"

"The State's case is concluded," said Bludger, sitting down.

"Anything for defence? I suppose not," cried the little judge, turning fiercely upon Eustace. "Hurry up, sir; hurry up! Are you going to take all the term with your defence? Other cases waiting! Witnesses and parties in other matters here! Why don't you hurry up? Say, sir!"

A bustle was now heard at the door, where old Magruder was being led in by Laura.

"Have you *no* evidence?" cried the little judge. "This is too bad. Twenty-five dollars a day does this court cost the people of the State, and here you are frittering away two dollars and a quarter an hour, sir, on frivolous exceptions. Hear me: I will not adjourn for breakfast, dinner, supper, or sleep until this case is concluded, and I shall limit the argument to five minutes on a side."

When the tall attenuated form of the old Scotchman crossed the floor leaning on his daughter's

arm, every eye except that of the judge was riveted upon them. He continued to talk until the witness was on the stand, and a new object was thus presented to his attention.

The prisoner's lawyer glanced at Griggles with assumed calmness, and then arising and looking at the witness, said in a low tone: "Referring when necessary to the tablets which you hold in your hand, answer from memory such questions as I ask. Where was Robert on the night—"

"Stop!" cried the scout, roughly interrupting. "I object to this witness's competency, and demand that the jury retire until that matter is determined."

At the judge's order, bailiffs again led out the jury. The scout now sat down, and glancing at the old Scotchman with a cunning expression, said, "Let me see your ivory book." He handed the tablets to the questioner.

After a pause, during which the look of abstraction, to Eustace's dismay, settled upon the witness's face, Bludger asked carelessly, "What place is this?"

"Dinna ken," replied the old gentleman, gazing vacantly about the room. "I hae tint the gate."

"What are all these people doing here?" asked the scout, looking at the crowd in feigned alarm.

"Dinna ken," answered poor old Magruder, anxiously. "Will the thrang steer an auld man?"

"Who killed Marie?" suddenly asked the lawyer.

"Anan!" said the aged witness in a bewildered way, and he gazed helplessly toward Eustace.

"You see how it is," said Bludger, glancing at the judge, who nodded in reply. "Any questions, Mr. Eustace?" he asked, with a malicious grin.

The eagle-like face of the young man looked like a marble carving, so impassive was its calm amidst the absolute stillness of the court-room. With a quick movement he took the tablets and placed them, open at the place of the memoranda, in old Magruder's hand, and, his heart beating almost audibly, he cried, "What of the puir lassie, all a white heap?"

The old Scotchman's eye rested on the ivory page, and intelligence flashed back to his worn face, lighting up his features like the dark places of some mediæval ruin.

"Ah, I ken, I ken!" he cried. "When the auld man sees the tablas he can remember a'. The auld man's memory is gane—a' gane—an' he writ down thae things at the time they occurred, because his memory was sae short that he knew he wad forget them unless he wrote them down."

His sluggish memory was now fully aroused, and, with the apology that he was eighty years of age, he proceeded and gave an intelligent account of the interview at the well with Doc, and

the ride on the causeway and finding of the body.

"How was Robert's gun discharged?" asked Eustace, observing that he omitted this.

Glancing at the tablets, old Magruder began, and without referring to them again described the shot at the tree and repeated the subsequent incidents.

"Where has that ivory book been since you wrote down the occurrences?" asked the scout.

"I hae kept the tablas a' the time," said the old man.

"You know nothing only as you read it from the book?" suggested Bludger.

"Dinna ken," said the old Scotchman, relapsing into a state of abstraction.

"Who brought you here?" asked the scout, roughly, "and what for?"

The poor old man looked about in feeble helplessness, and seeing Eustace, he said pleadingly, "Let them no hurt the puir bairn."

Silence succeeded. In the densely crowded courtroom the suppressed excitement was intense. Every one felt that the judge's ruling on the competency of this witness was decisive of the case. None noticed the poor old father, who, slipping from the witness-box, stood leaning on the rail just behind his son's chair.

Bludger arose, in the oppressive silence, and said: "This is a clear case of senile *dementia.* No person can be examined as a witness who has not such an understanding as enables him to retain in memory the events he has witnessed. Depositions cannot be read in criminal cases, much less an unverified memorandum."

Wiley Eustace arose, his face betraying no emotion except in the blue veins that stood out like whip-cords; and, with graceful ease, as if addressing a lady in her parlor, he leaned his arm lightly on the judge's desk and said: "We do not propose to read the tablets to the jury, nor to have the witness examine and repeat *verbatim* their contents; but he will merely refer to the book as questions are asked, and this reference will so awaken his memory as to enable him to answer. He will swear to the facts independently of the notes. The witness is not wholly without memory. This faculty is so sluggish that it needs to be refreshed by reference to the notes; but when so awakened you have seen it was sufficient to enable him to give an exceedingly lucid account of the circumstances."

Eustace paused, and the judge seemed hesitating. Up rose Bludger, with a frown, and exclaimed: "By St. George, this is ridiculous! His memory must be relied on to establish the facts that he made the memorandum on the night of the murder and has

kept it in his possession ever since; and if his memory is treacherous about the killing itself, it is equally so about these other vital facts."

"True, Mr. Bludger, true," said the little judge. "The witness is excluded." And looking over to old Magruder, he added, "Your evidence, old man, is not needed."

"Thank ye, judge!" said the old Scotchman, smiling childishly in his face. "May Robin Adair gang awa' wi' me?"

Eustace handed the little judge a paper which Swain had been writing during this scene, and said: "We except to your ruling, and tender this bill, which we ask shall be now signed. The case is closed."

"I will just keep it," said the little judge, taking the bill, "and look over it."

"No other opportunity can occur before the jury retire," explained the lawyer.

"Oh, that's neither here nor there!" exclaimed the judge. "Bailiff, bring in the jury."

"Hand me the bill," said Eustace, extending his hand. "You refuse to sign."

"I do nothing," said the little man, sorely perplexed and looking toward the scout.

"The bill does not present the facts accurately," said Bludger, at a venture.

"Then I refuse!" cried the little judge; and tear-

ing up the paper, he threw the fragments upon the floor. At this moment the jury returned, and Bludger began to address them.

During the further progress of the trial Swain made three copies of each bill as originally drawn. These were certified by Griggles and Shaw to truly state the facts as they witnessed them, and one set was filed with the clerk just as the jury rose to retire; another set Eustace handed to General Griggles; and the third he kept himself.

As the jury filed out after the limited argument, old Magruder was still clinging to the rail; and looking at them, he cried: "Ah! men, turn the puir bairn free. He's a gude bairn, men—a gude bairn is Robin."

The jurors averted their faces and passed into their room. An oppressive silence followed, and poor old Magruder, frightened at the stillness, crept along the rail until he stood behind Laura's chair.

"Annie Laurie," whispered the old man, "will they hurt our Robin?"

Laura did not heed him, for at this instant was heard the tramp of the returning jury heavy with her brother's fate.

The jury was drawn up in line, and the foreman handed their verdict to the clerk. Old Magruder looked at them and laughed: "Ah! Laurie, we

maun take Robin hame—bonnie Robin Adair."

The words, "We the jury find the defendant guilty as charged," were succeeded by a death-like silence; and then a wail rose in that court-room which none there ever forgot.

"Robin, my bairn Robin! Robin, my bairn, my bairn!" the old man wailed, and fell.

They went to raise him up; but the silver cord was severed—broken the golden bowl. The troubled spirit had flown up from the battling passions of men to the white-winged angels of peace.

CHAPTER XIV.

"Oh! qu'il fallut de courage à l'orphelin dans le cours de cette marche douloureuse!"—*Robert.*

THE cold moonlight was falling on old Magruder's house; and he lay dead in the parlor. Eustace sat near a post on the gallery, the Newfoundland at his feet. About the porch, through the rooms, walked Laura, carrying now a piece of cloth, now a hat, aimlessly wandering, and searching for something, she knew not what. By the post on the gallery the girl saw a form sitting in the moonlight, in the chair, with Bracken at his feet. Was it not like her father? She could not bear another to sit thus to-night.

Touching Eustace, she whispered, "Move, please; your presence pains me." And the fine-toned young man, comprehending her feeling, rose and entered the parlor where the gray-haired pastor was watching.

"Ah!" said Angus Macfarlane, looking at the dead, "we were boys thegither on the banks o' Nith; lang syne, our forebears lived at Loch Lomond."

The lawyer made no answer, but, pressing the old minister's hand in silence, he sat down by the bier. All night they waited there, hearing the slow walk of Laura through the house; and at daylight it ceased.

Afterward Dinah brings coffee and bread. No person calls until noon; then appear men to act as pall-bearers. This neglect surprises Eustace, who remarks upon it indignantly. The old pastor sighs, and shakes his head and only says, "He was a gude man."

Later the little procession moves out the gate and along a ridge-road. Great oaks tower seventy and eighty feet and interlock their limbs across the way. Under their shadows march the farm-servants first, then the pall-bearers with the bier, and lastly old Angus and Eustace, supporting the pale daughter of the dead.

A walnut-grove, surrounded by dense blue cane, half hides a little chapel, and in the church-yard, there by an open grave, two negroes lean upon their spades. About this place assemble now all who would do reverence to the name of Magruder. They are not the great ones of the earth. Mechanics and laborers, in their working garb, stand under the shade of the trees; a few old farmers are nearer the grave, where Magruder's daughter is standing supported by her brother's lawyer; and

the heiress, Miss Cecil, sits in her carriage without the circle of mourners, as if she feared to be seen.

Opposite Laura, by the open grave, is another group. Robert's leonine face is sorrowful, but his grand form still towers like a column over the guards who stand around him. Once the young man looks across the grave at his sister, then he lowers his eyes and does not again raise them during the burial.

The minister stands by the bier uncovered, his white hair moving in the breeze, and begins chanting the beautiful words:

> "I would not live alway; I ask not to stay
> Where storm after storm gathers dark o'er the way."

But the old man's quavering voice grows weaker, and in the second line breaks into sobs.

Laura raises her eyes, and then looks inquiringly around the circle. No voice responds; and advancing one step, she takes up the strain. Her tone is weak at first, but as she proceeds the anguish of her sweet face gives place to a beam of love, her full rich contralto voice is joined by Wiley's strong tenor, the laborers take up the hymn, and the woods seem filled with the music:

> "Where rivers of pleasure roll o'er the bright plains,
> And the noontide of glory eternally reigns."

And as the flood of harmony flows through the

walnut-grove, a smile of triumph beams amidst old Angus Macfarlane's tears.

The solemn service was said, and green sod set upon the old Scotchman's grave, when Robert, turning from the place, walked back with his guards to the jail. Black people lined the way, and the young man's heart was bowed when he saw their great dull eyes gazing at him in helpless sorrow. If he weathered the storm himself, he feared that he could hardly do aught for them; and it grieved his noble mind to be the centre of honest desires which he was unable to gratify.

Laura was returning alone to her desolate home, when Eustace, who observed her solitary figure crossing a field, hastened and overtook her.

"Oh, Eustace!" said the girl, raising her tearless eyes in anguish, "I am wholly forsaken."

A look of surprise and pain crossed the young man's face; but immediately he answered, "Not so, Laura; am not I here?"

She looked at him in a startled way, and whispered hurriedly, "Oh! you cannot marry me now —the sister of a man to die—"

Covering her face with her hands, the poor girl sank shudderingly at the root of a peach-tree that grew in the old field. Eustace sat down beside her, and, taking her hands in his, said smilingly, "Your brother will be cleared of this charge."

"Why mock me?" asked Laura; "he is already condemned."

"Unjust condemnations are often reversed," replied Eustace, kindly; "and to show my faith in Robert's, innocence I am willing to fix our wedding for the day after he is released."

She looked into his fine, strong face and felt a confidence which she could not herself explain. Eustace knew that a groundless hope would fade when his presence was withdrawn, and therefore he added, "The papers which you saw General Griggles sign show the judge's errors, and the Supreme Court, on these, will order another trial."

Laura smiled; but after thinking a moment she turned pale, and a look of fear came over her changeful countenance.

"Does all depend on these papers?" she asked.

"Yes," answered the lawyer, looking at her in some wonder. "Why do you ask?"

"Oh! Eustace, are you keeping them?" she cried in alarm.

The lawyer looked at the lady in amazement now, and something like caution was in his eye as he said, "In my pocket."

"Mercy, Eustace!" she cried, "they will kill you for them. You do not know what you encounter."

An expression of deep sorrow settled on his fine aquiline face, and he muttered, "What a pity!

what a pity! These troubles have unsettled her mind."

His words were inaudible, but she divined his thoughts, and the idea was irritating. Rising hastily, she said, "Let me go home," and walked on accompanied by the lawyer. After a while she looked up and said, "Eustace, be very careful. Save Robert, but do not risk your life."

"I promise both," answered Eustace, as if talking to a petted child. "But who stays here with you?"

"Dinah remains to-day," answered Laura, as she stepped upon the gallery of the old home, "and to-night I stay at the parsonage."

"Now good-day, dearest," said Eustace, kissing her cheek. "You need rest. Remember that Robert is perfectly safe, and retire to good dreams."

Gently pressing her hand, he bowed and hastily went off toward the county town. His walk was uninterrupted until he approached Court Square, but there some singular incidents occurred.

Two men whom he knew approached as if to speak, but when he extended his hand both turned their backs upon him and walked away. Eustace was cosmopolitan, and mentally noting them as ill-bred, he walked onward; but he had not proceeded eighty yards when the scout, with two

notorious women, stood in his way. Bludger, pointing at him and addressing the women, said: "He's got her, but I was there before him, ha! ha! ha!" and the three, wagging their heads, laughed in the young man's face.

He walked around these, but immediately encountered another man, an acquaintance, who approached him and said, "Ah! the madam! How is the cyprian?" and without awaiting an answer, he too, wagging his head and sticking out his tongue, went laughing away. Another, making six men whom he had encountered thus, waited at his office-door, and entering with him, said: "I have come to consult you. The old man's girl was always a bad case;" and he grinned at the lawyer.

"What old man?" asked Eustace.

"Oh, fudge!" cried the fellow; and putting his finger to his nose, he went off laughing.

Soon afterward a seventh man, entering the lawyer's office, stood before him and abruptly said: "Self-defence is the only right recognized here. No man can retain respect unless he carries his life in his hand." Wheeling about, this individual left as abruptly as he entered. Through the door, which this fellow left wide open, Eustace saw Bludger with three of the men he had met in the square wagging their heads, and sticking out their

tongues, and laughing as they pointed at his office.

Closing the door, he lit a cigar and sat down to reflect upon these events. Obviously here was a conspiracy; but he was unable to comprehend what end they had in view. He was still thoroughly puzzled, and the room was growing dark with twilight, when the door was thrown violently open and another man entered. This was the eighth. Standing right where the former stood, this one asked, "Are you still hanging on to Magruder's case?"

"Magruder's case!" echoed Eustace. "What do you mean?"

The man laughed. Then approaching Eustace, he added in a confidential manner, "They will do anything. If a man stands in the way, they remove him. If a little blood bespatters their clothes, they wipe it off with their handkerchiefs."

Turning about, this man abruptly left the room, nodding back at the lawyer as he closed the door.

Eustace now looked at his watch, and seeing that it was supper-time, walked to the hotel where he boarded. The scout was standing with the seven other men upon the gallery, and the two women were midway of Court Square. The young man expected further affronts of the same kind; but when he met the females, they removed their

hats and with sly smiles bowed to the ground. All the men bowed, and the scout, approaching, began complimenting him upon the management of the Magruder case, saying that no other lawyer on earth could have fixed in the record the reversible error. They conducted him, with a kind of ovation, to the dining-room, and managed during the evening so that each was enabled to assure Eustace of his boundless esteem.

When the young man returned to his office he thought of this new phase of the affair. He was puzzled a while by the fact that almost every one whom he saw had assumed the aspects of the eight men, first aggression and afterward elaborate politeness. A little reflection led him to the belief that this universality was unreal, but was attributable partly to fancy and partly to the sympathy of the crowd with the conspirators; for of the existence of a conspiracy he had now no doubt. Moreover, he felt satisfied that Bludger and his seven co-workers had not abandoned their design, but had formed a more subtle plan to effect their end. That end, he inferred, related to the only matter which they mentioned—the Magruder case; and as he had the copy of the bill of exceptions, perhaps they were trying to get possession of this paper.

When the lawyer reached this conclusion he

entered the middle room of his suit of apartments, which was between his office and sleeping-room. Here was his library and a burglar-proof safe. He put the paper into the safe and set the combination. Then walking into the back room, he lay down upon the bed and was quickly asleep.

How long he remained sleeping he never knew. During the night he was awakened by a ticking sound as if some one was tampering with the combination, and he was about to arise when his door swung open and a queer procession entered his room.

First walked two things with skulls for heads, and skeleton bodies, bearing axes red with gore. Next marched two robed entirely in black gowns, with holes for their eyes. These carried torches; and between them was a nondescript who bore a pole to which was fastened the raw head of a newly-slain ox. A black coffin was next carried by two men arrayed in black with corpse-like faces; and on the coffin he read the name "Wiley Eustace." Last marched a large figure in blood-red, with a red hood drawn over its head, and a red mask; and this one carried a long glittering sword.

Thrice this singular procession marched in a circle before his bed, and then paused. The red mask, pointing its glittering sword at the name upon the

coffin, cried thrice, in deep husky tones, "Beware! Beware! Beware!" A deafening explosion shook the building. The torches were extinguished. The lawyer tried to arise in the darkness, but a sensation of drowsiness overpowered him, and falling back on the bed, he lay seemingly lifeless as the images of death just seen.

CHAPTER XV.

"Conscience has no more to do with gallantry than it has with politics."—*The Duenna.*

WHEN Eustace awoke, sunlight was streaming through the open blind, and a faint odor of chloroform was in the room. His limbs felt like lead, and he arose with a splitting headache. Gradually the night's events returned to his mind, and hastily making his toilet, he walked into the library. Shelving and books were blackened by the explosion, and the safe-door was swung back on its hinges.

A moment's examination disclosed that everything in the safe remained untouched except the copy of the bill of exceptions: this was gone.

The lawyer walked immediately to the courthouse. He found the clerk sitting in his office; and this man eyed him, as he entered, with an inquisitive stare.

"Hand me the bill of exceptions filed in Magruder's case," asked Eustace. "Is it here?"

"Surely, I don't know," replied the clerk. "Look for yourself;" and he threw the file of papers in the case toward the lawyer.

The bill was not in them. Two copies were gone, and the one held by Griggles alone remained. Would they get that also? Eustace thought of telegraphing a warning, but on second thought concluded that he might only notify others of the whereabouts of the third copy, and that he had better trust to the old lawyer's sagacity.

On his way to breakfast he stopped at the post-office. The *Crow* and a letter constituted his mail. Hastily glancing over an article in the paper which, purporting to describe the trial, really aimed to create the belief that the bill certified by the two lawyers was untrue in fact and devised to enable a guilty man to avoid a fair conviction, he threw the paper aside, muttering, "Will they never cease this persecution?" and opened the letter. It was from an old army friend who stood at his side when their brigade sustained the desperate charges of General Lee's army at Malvern Hill and held the victorious Confederates in check until McClellan's broken columns escaped. This friend, president of a mining company in the Rocky Mountains, wanted a resident attorney at Denver, and his thoughts recurred to his old companion-in-arms. Five times his present income was offered Eustace as salary, but he hesitated about accepting.

During his residence in this country Eustace had become identified in feeling with the people. He

knew the great possibilities of the rich, heavily timbered, well-watered land, and he was loath to see this made a wilderness by the conflict of races. The class of which Percy Cecil was a type he felt would never act. Bludger and his set would plainly unless checked reduce the country to a pandemonium. Robert's course he feared was erroneous; and nothing remained but to separate the races. But he and people like him were the class to face this difficulty. True, he was but an individual; but would his departure encourage other earnest men to settle here?

After all, he thought, Laura may prefer to live there; and with this, he walked across to the livery stable, took a horse, and started for the parsonage. When he emerged from a cypress-break through which the road passed, the gables of the cottage arose among masses of grape, myrtle, and honeysuckle vines. The yard in front was filled with roses, and among these stood Laura, looking in her black dress and white sun-bonnet like a beautiful nun.

She came toward him with extended hands, exclaiming: "Oh, Eustace, I am so much indebted to you! Robert, from whom I have just returned, has told me what care you took to perfect his appeal."

The lawyer thought of the safe, and answered, in

a disconcerted manner: "Ah! Don't mention the affair. The argument at the capital is to-morrow. I will see Robert again to-night. Ah! Yes." After a moment's pause he asked, "What was I saying?"

"A jumble of many things," answered Laura, smiling slightly. "But come into the sitting-room, will you not?"

"Yes," answered Eustace, tying the horse from which he had dismounted to a limb; and following her toward the house, he added, "I have thought of taking you to Colorado."

"What! that wild country!" she said. Eustace, remembering his experience of the night, smiled; as he thought of that of the afternoon, however, his brow grew dark, and he said, "It can hardly be wilder than this."

When they were seated in the little room, Laura turned to him and said, "Now tell me about Colorado and what we shall do when we get there."

Eustace explained to her the offer, and stated his reasons for wishing to decline. Laura decided these absurd, but said sadly that she did not like to leave the place where the bodies of her parents rested. The lawyer suggested that her parents left their progenitors in Scotland, and such good people could not do wrong. So they talked the

matter over; and when Eustace took his leave it was settled that as soon as Robert was acquitted they should be married and live in Denver.

Soon after Eustace took leave of his affianced bride. An hour later Laura was still in the sitting-room, thinking of their interview. She sat by the window looking out at the garden, when a feeling of some presence in the room disturbed her meditation. A hand was laid on her shoulder; and rising hastily, she confronted the scout.

"Don't look at me out of your ringlets so much like a wild-cat in a jessamine-vine," he said, laughing, "and I will make you a reasonable offer."

The girl shrank within herself at this man's bold glance. The shudder that her sensitive nature felt at his proximity, however, did not prevent her replying with wonted dignity.

"What you have to say, sir, say quickly and be gone, for your presence is oppressive."

"Hoity, toity!" cried the scout. "What's all this about? By St. George! I come to propose more than you have any right to expect, and you receive me in this manner. Well," he continued, taking a seat, "your brother's life is in my hands."

"I do not know," answered Laura. "But suppose that true; what then?"

"If you will grant me one request—" he began; but the lady interrupted him.

"Oblige me by leaving, will you not?" she asked, in a half-tremulous tone; "or, if you remain, I must go." And she moved toward the door.

Bludger stepped before her and barred egress. "Hear me, Laura," he said earnestly. "You know not my power—"

"Oh! yes, I do," she answered. "You exhausted it in procuring an unfair trial which cannot stand."

"Ha!" cried the scout, flushing with rage, "has Master Eustace been teaching you bad law? Know, then, young lady, that he will never get his appeal without my permission."

"He has it now without your permission," answered the lady. "Let me out of the room."

She moved partly around the scout; but he, turning and facing her again, said, "Even if acquitted, he is still in my power. He cannot live unless I will it."

"What!" cried the girl, quivering with emotion, "would you commit murder?"

"For your sake, Laura," he said, advancing a step and extending his arms, "I would do anything."

"Mr. Bludger, ye are gaun ane vera wicked gait! Ye maunna worry this puir orphan;" and the old pastor, advancing through the open door behind the scout, stood between him and Laura. "Surely a gude Providence will frustrate your evil designs!"

"Old man," said Bludger, with a sneer, "the powers above never interfere in such affairs as this."

"Out on ye, man!" cried old Angus in horror, raising his hands. "Ye are ane servan' o' the deil!"

"Quite right, old gentleman," cried the scout, with a bow; "and my master never forsakes his followers at the pinch. Ha! ha! ha! A better service than yours, old man!"

"Laura," cried he after the retreating figure of the girl, who had escaped during this colloquy, "remember my words!"

She paused and looked back. "What do you mean?" she said. "Be explicit, sir!"

"By George!" cried the scout, "unless you promise, Robert shall die."

Without a word Laura walked into another room, closing the door behind her; and the old pastor opened the front entrance, and said, "Gude-day, Mr. Bludger, gude-day! gude-day!" Putting his hand on the scout's broad back, he gently urged him into the yard.

The sorrel horse stood at the gate, and Bludger, mounting, galloped to a telegraph-station eight miles up the causeway. Leaping from the saddle, he entered and cried to the operator, "Call the capital!"

"Well," said the youth, presently, "the capital is ready. What shall I send?"

"This," answered the scout; and he handed him a form on which was written:

"*Red Head:*

Get the thing.

BLACK."

The operator smiled, and, sitting at his instrument, began ticking away; while Bludger again mounted the sorrel and rode to his home.

Robert meantime was in jail. A small windowless box, lined with oak slabs heavily studded with spikes, was the cell of the condemned; and here the young man sat on a stool which constituted its furniture. His face rested in his hands. None here had seen any weakness in Magruder; least of all the coarse turnkey who, thrusting him into the place, told how its last occupant, a brutal child-killer, hanged himself from the grating overhead. But alone now with his reflections, a shadow crossed the strong spirit, and he groaned, "What have I done to suffer thus?" Like an answer rose the scene in ideal presence:

The interior of an old school-house, guarded without by foolish black men; a tin box, unprotected save by the silent majesty of right; the ballots, witnesses of the people's choice, substi-

tuted by others; liberty's stream polluted at its source.

"Why should I be singled out for punishment?" muttered the young man. "How common has this become?"

Ay, Robin! but thou art no common man. Wretched creatures may grovel in the mire, and rise and dance down their miserable ways with the slime of corruption sticking to their rags. But thou, Robin, with thy clear intellect, giant strength, and splendid powers mightst have attained the loftiest achievements. For men like thee, O Robin Adair, no slums were made. Like Lucifer, thy glory must be unblemished or thy fall complete.

CHAPTER XVI.

"But John P.
Robinson he
Sez they didn't know everythin' down in Judee."
The Biglow Papers.

AT the capital was Blues' Bank, kept by two brothers—Cal and Ral. This was a respectable old bank, and it occupied the ground-floor of a venerable building opposite the Capitol green. Law-offices were on the floor above, and that of counsellor Griggles was directly over the vault. An air of hoary wisdom pervaded the place, expressive of experience equal to every emergency. Few persons mistook for slumber this apparently docile repose, and those who did were apt to be startled by the vitality of the old lawyer and the venerable bank.

The old lawyer was never known to ask for a fee, and the old bank had never refused a request for accommodation. But somehow old Griggles' feeless cases advanced in a circle, and Blues' Bank —well, it had a venerable ledger, very large and bound with iron bands.

A tradition existed that this old book was purchased at the bankruptcy-sale of the effects of a firm that had a crazy book-keeper. The assignee and court and creditors had all looked over the interminable columns of figures, seeking light upon the affairs of the insolvent firm, but the longer they looked the greater grew their confusion, and when symptoms of insanity began to appear among the investigators, the court, *pro bono publico*, ordered the assignee to sell the old volume instantly for cash; and brother Ral, who thought he could utilize the book, purchased it for a few dollars. When a creditless gentleman applied for a loan, or a suspicious character wanted some forbidden information, the brothers never declined, but with an affectionate smile old Cal would say, "Brother Ral, examine our ledger and see." Old Ral would take down the iron-bound ledger, and after a while, if the applicant still persisted, would remark, "I can't find it;" and turning the book to the inquirer say, "Look now at this!" and leaving him with the tome, go back to his business. An hour's search would invariably bring the searcher, with strained eyes and a racking headache, to the old banker's desk with the Request, "Won't you look?" "Oh yes," the old men would say, with the smiles of little children—"when we have time." "But when will you have time?" "When?

Ah! To-morrow, or next week, or some time. Call again; we'll be *so* glad to see you."

Toward this venerable pile two gentlemen strolled on the afternoon last mentioned. One was a mild-looking youth with dreamy eyes; and as they sauntered leisurely down the street he observed, glancing over his companion's shoulder at some passing ladies, "Puty guls, by Jove!" The other, a military little man with high-top boots, fiercely twirled his mustache and cried, "Telegraph-office, by gar!" Accordingly the gentlemen turned the corner and entered the temple of ticking.

"Red Head?" suggested the dreamy youth inquiringly to the flaming-haired son of Erin who bobbed up behind the counter.

"Fifty cints," remarked the boy, throwing a freshly sealed envelope to the visitors.

Languidly opening the despatch, the youth read, glancing at his military companion, "Get the thing;" and then throwing the paper back upon the counter, asked the boy, with an air of gentle reproach, "Why give me this?"

"Why, yer sid rid hid, didn't yer?" asked the son of Erin, flushing to the tips of his ears.

"Why, yes, my youthful friend," said the mild-eyed young man, raising an eye-glass and gazing at the boy's flaming hair, "But when—aw—one

states—aw—a fact one doesn't ask—aw—for a telegram, by Jove;" and leisurely turning, the two gentlemen sauntered out of the office.

Down the street they strolled, and by the merest accident, as it were, turned into the bank. When inside, the mild-eyed youth assumed an airy style, and advancing to the nearest brother with extended palm, exclaimed, "How now, Rally! Do you locate me, by Jove?"

Old Ral looked up with a genial smile, and cried "Locate you? Why, who could forget Mr. —eh?"

"Red," suggested the mild-eyed youth. "Now I said to Head, 'Head,' said I, 'old Rally never forgets a face.' 'I'll wager he has forgotten us both, Red,' said Head, 'and so has old Cal.'"

"Never!" cried Cal, coming forward with effusion. "Who could fail to remember General Head?"

"By the way, Cally, me boy," said the dreamy youth, stepping carelessly in front of his companion, who was examining the position of the vault, "oblige us with the Magruder record. Counsellor Griggles is waiting."

"Certainly," said old Cal, with an air expressive of the exquisite pleasure which he felt in obliging his friends; and then turning, he said, "Brother Ral, take out the ledger and see."

Old Ral pulled down the tome, and began running his finger up and down the endless columns of figures; but his eye did not follow. Under the broad-faced spectacles it was glancing uneasily about—now at old Cal, now at the military man, who stood too near the vault, and now at the dusty old clock on the wall whose hands stood at ten minutes of four. Scratch, scratch went the pens, tick, tock, the old clock, and brother Ral sat by the open ledger.

Bang! bang! bang! bang! sounded the hour at last; and old Ral, closing the book with a thud, exclaimed, "Clock struck four; shut the door!"

Brother Ral and brother Cal hovered about the two visitors, and finally, with sympathetic smiles, ushered them out on the sidewalk. Here the military gentleman made a stand. "By gar!" said he, "when will you tell about the record?"

"Really," said old Cal, with a benevolent gleam in his kindly eyes, "we have not found the entry. Return to-morrow, or next week, or some time. We'll be *so* glad to see you."

The door was closed; and the visitors stood gazing quizzically at each other. Pointing to an ornamental apex on the dome of the Capitol across the way, the military man observed, "An acorn, be gar!"

"No," answered his mild-eyed companion,

"puty magnolias, be Jove!" And locking their arms, the two worthies strolled leisurely across the way, and walked under the rock-arches into the rotunda of the Capitol.

In the banking-house, after their departure, the clinking of coin and scratching of pens, mingled with the steady ticking of the old time-keeper, were the only sounds for half an hour; and then Cal, throwing the last gold piece into a box, turned his kindly eyes toward his brother, who responded instinctively.

"Brother Ral, Red!" said the one.

"Brother Cal, Head!" cried the other. And after a moment's pause, he added, "This bank was never robbed."

Another pause ensued, during which the brothers put everything into the vault, and fastened its locks and drew its bolts. Then old Ral, looking steadily at his companion, said, "Stay here, brother Cal; I'm going for the babies."

Old Cal sat down by the vault and waited. It was raining without, and darkness came on apace. The good old gentleman felt nervous, when suddenly a violent thumping was heard on the door. Old Cal opened it with a beating heart, and in marched brother Ral with his seven stalwart babies —each over six feet high, and developed in proportion.

They were clad in long water-proofs, with hoods coming over their heads; and when they mounted the huge vault of masonry and laid their pistols across their knees, they looked like sentries on the tomb of the Capulets expecting an attack of the Montagues.

Hour after hour was struck by the big clock, and nothing was seen in the dim light of the single low-turned burner save the shadows of the old bankers walking here and there, and nothing was heard but the occasional movement of one of the young giants changing his position on the vault.

After the stroke of twelve, however, dull rapping was heard overhead; a crackling noise succeeded, and in a moment half the floor of Griggles' office fell into the bank with a crash, disclosing the rifled room charred and yet burning, and the gentlemanly visitors, Mr. Red and Mr. Head, ready to leap down upon the vault.

The military gentleman, whose eyes, unaccustomed to the glare, could not at once distinguish objects in the darker bank, leaned over the hole and thrust down his body. Seven cold pistol-barrels touched his face at once. "Ugh!" cried he; and leaping up, he ran out through the office-door, followed by his mild-eyed companion.

Next morning, just as the clock struck ten, old Griggles came downstairs, calmly as if he had not

been half an hour contemplating the wreck of his office; and entering the bank, with his cast-iron smile, he said quietly, "Magruder record."

Mr. Cal, beaming kindly, handed the paper to the lawyer, who made a formal bow, and, turning, like an automaton, marched over to the Capitol. As he passed under the arches, an old gentleman, wearing a benign countenance strikingly like the statue of Benjamin Franklin in front of Independence Hall, appeared upon the balcony above, and leaning on a gold-headed cane, looked carelessly down the wide avenue which stretched for a mile before his view. "Oh yes, oh yes!" remarked this old man, addressing himself seemingly to creation in general. "The Supreme Court is now open pursuant to adjournment." No one appeared to notice the remark, and, after gazing placidly over the scene awhile, he turned and followed Griggles into the court-room.

CHAPTER XVII.

"He should have lived,
Save that his riotous youth, with dangerous sense,
Might in the times to come have ta'en revenge."
Measure for Measure.

LIGHTS flash from the windows of the Magruders' homestead, and in the rooms where Laura has lived from childhood neighbors have just witnessed her marriage. A shadow of regret rests upon her pure Grecian features, for to-morrow she leaves the old place forever; but in her deep blue eyes fixed on Eustace's dark eaglet face is a wife's tender trustfulness.

Robert stands near his sister and her husband. Something softens the strong lines of his leonine countenance, and, slightly bending his head, he says, "Little sister, I have given you into safe hands; I know by my own case."

"Counsellor Griggles suggested the writ of Habeas Corpus," says Eustace, deprecatingly. "It occurred to him, he said, when preparing the argument for the Supreme Court which greatly aided me in obtaining a reversal of the sentence."

"Whatever he may have suggested," says Rob-

ert, with a smile, "I know that my unconditional discharge was due to your examination of Doctor Cole. By the way, he has been sent to the insane asylum."

"Poor negro!" murmurs Laura. "Marie was slain, then, by a lunatic. I knew that no one could have enmity to the girl."

Counsellor Griggles now approaches, and, making his automatic bow, congratulates the bride and bridegroom; then with a mysterious look he touches the latter's arm and takes him aside.

"Eustace, I have heard of your examination of Cole, and how he went all to pieces when you showed him a bone wrapped in lead-foil," says the old counsellor, confidentially. "Now, my dear sir, I should like to know how you accomplished that result—a matter of practice, you know, Eustace; a matter of curious practice, eh?"

The young lawyer smiles at the general's clumsy attempt to disguise his curiosity, and proceeds: "After old Mr. Magruder's death, his tablets fell into my hands; and examining them at leisure, I found a scrap of a conjuration-song about getting a round snake-bone. Its proximity to the old man's notes of the interview near the well with Doc Cole suggested the possibility that if he was, as I suspected, the girl's slayer, he had loaded his gun with such a charge."

"Admirable deduction!" exclaimed old Griggles. "But how did you proceed, and how keep it secret?"

"On the morning of the hearing I obtained an order from the judge to exhume the girl's body. No one knew the result until the examiner brought me the bone just as Cole took the stand."

"It's a wonder the little judge did not warn Bludger, and he the negro!" exclaims old Griggles.

"They had no time for consultation. I asked for the order after he opened the hearing. But the conduct of Bludger puzzled me. From the moment the saw the direction for examining the body he appeared to grow nervous; and when the bone was produced I thought he would fall to the floor, he became so livid."

"Singular!" says the old man, thoughtfully. "Bludger is a dangerous man. Do you know I hardly believe he will let young Magruder alone even now? In fact, I heard this evening the hotel man (Jack Jousin, I believe he is called) talking to an ugly grizzled specimen of humanity near my window. They were unaware of my presence, and Jousin said that Bludger could not afford to spare Magruder for fear of the latter's revenge."

The gentlemen are silent awhile, and then return to Laura; but Bessie Cecil, passing Griggles

as he speaks and catching his last words, hurries across the room to her father.

"That Bludger is going to kill Robert Magruder," she cries, her gray eyes dancing with excitement, "and you, father, can prevent the crime!"

Percy Cecil, who is leaning gracefully near a window, his elbow resting on a flower-stand, slowly turns his eyes from contemplation of the garden, and looks in surprised inquiry at his daughter.

"Oh, don't look at me that way!" says the girl, stamping her foot impatiently. "You know what this thing means, and you can keep them from hurting him."

"Even if I could," says Cecil, solwly, "I see no reason why I should jeopard my life for his. This evening I am here on your entreaty only; and I shall do no more."

"Do you mean you will allow a great crime to be perpetrated without taking measures to prevent it?" she says with flashing eyes, in a husky tone of suppressed passion. "Then you approve the murder."

"No," answers her father, calmly. "Many things occur which we disapprove, yet we care not to hazard fortune and life to prevent their occurrence."

She pauses awhile, her foot tapping impatiently against the matting; then she says, "Who are

likely to be banded with the scout? You know he will not try it alone!"

"Cecil starts and gazes curiously at his daughter. Then he writes eight names with his gold pencil on a leaf of his note-book, and tearing it out, hands the list to her. She reads the names of Bludger and the seven others of the ceiled room; and her father taking back the paper, slowly tears it into small pieces and scatters them.

She is about to address another remark to her father, when he beckons to Griggles, who is passing and laughingly says, "Young Magruder informs me that his enemies attempted to destroy his bill of exceptions in order to defeat his appeal; but this I suppose is untrue as absurd."

"Why absurd?" asks the lawyer, with a noncommittal expression on his time-worn countenance.

"Can you not prove the contents of a lost record?" triumphantly asks the iron-gray gentleman.

"You can try," says old Griggles, with a dry smile, "and enough burglars upon the other side can outswear you."

"Umph!" exclaims Cecil. "Daughter, the night is passing. Let us take our leave."

The departure of Cecil and his daughter does not affect the company, who remain until an early hour in the morning. A negro at the gate then an-

nounces a steamer in sight; and Laura reappears, after a moment's absence, wearing a travelling-dress. Their friends now say farewell; Eustace puts his wife into a carriage, her brother follows, and the three are driven to the wharf-boat.

Heedless of their signal, this boat goes coughing up the river, and the travellers sit down with Robert to await another steamer whose black smoke rises in the dawning light above the willows around a great bend some twenty miles away. A thumping sound begins soon after in the wharf-boat.

"Hark! What is that noise?" anxiously asks Laura. Robert, stretched on a bench, yawns drowsily, and says, "Rats. These old hulks harbor them." But Eustace, who is looking around the partition-wall behind which they sit, laughs lightly and remarks: "This however, is a Frogg. What can he be printing before sunrise? Ha!" The exclamation is caused by the gloved hand of Bludger, which reaching, from another screen, takes a moist sheet from the press.

Three landings are made in the bend; and it is high noon when the steamer lays her guards against the wharf-boat. She proves to be the Golden Lily, from New Orleans bound for Cincinnati, Solomon Shingle master—a large and handsome boat.

The Newfoundland Bracken leaps upon the boat

and turns toward Laura. Robert conducts his sister across the staging, and they ascend into the long glittering cabin; but Eustace remains upon the wharf-boat to see after their trunks. He steps on the stage just as the head-line is cast loose, taking at the moment a printed sheet which Frogg thrusts into his hand. Glancing at this paper his brow darkens, and he hurries immediately to the upper deck.

Here stands a very young man, who appears to command the boat. Looking up occasionally with an apologetic air to an old fellow in the pilot-house, he suggests rather than orders the movements. Brix is the old man at the wheel. His long white beard was black when he steered the Copper Lily for this young captain's grandfather, and he wore it slightly grizzled on the Silver Lily which the youth's father commanded.

"Brix," says the infant master to his old nurse of a pilot, "perhaps if you were standing here it would occur to you to back her." Brix backs her, and the boat slowly recedes from the wharf.

"Brix," the infant observes as the steamer moves out into the current, "if you stop the larboard wheel and go ahead on the starboard, perhaps she will look up the river." Old Brix stops one engine and starts the other forward, and the graceful Lily turns her prow to the current.

"Now, Brix, what do you think of the propriety of turning her loose on both sides?" The old pilot considers this suggestion awhile, and then sets some bells jingling, and the great steamer, dashing the foam before her, begins ploughing the mighty current of the Mississippi.

Wiley Eustace bows to the infant, and ascending an open stairway, sits down on a high bench in the glass abode immediately behind the old pilot. Soon the pilot's boy is steering, and old Brix is seated beside the lawyer reading the printed slip. An hour later Eustace is about to descend, when Laura appears on deck with Robert and they playfully ask him to come down from the clouds.

* * * * * *

Cecil's pretty daughter is swinging in a hammock under an oak-tree on her father's grassy lawn, when Paccolett rides up on Barbara, her spirited bay, and slipping off the saddle, hands a network pouch to the lady.

Bessie has just dined, and feels languid. She throws the pouch aside, and leans backward in her swing and closes her bright gray eyes.

Paccolett lingers uneasily; erelong he says, "Miss Bessie, sumfin in mail!"

Opening her eyes in languid surprise, the lady glances at the boy. "Hand me the pouch," she says; and opening it, she takes out a printed slip.

This is the publication which Eustace has upon the steamboat. A column of strong denunciation of Robert Magruder as a traitor to his race and an inciter of negro insurrection closes with the statement that he has announced his determination to kill Daniel Bludger at sight; and this is attested by eight names—the names which her father showed her at Magruder's last night.

Deathlike sickness overpowers her for a moment. Then springing from the hammock, she cries, "Paccolett, bring Barbara!"

"Him at de gate," says Paccolett; and Bessie, running to the mare, seizes the bridle, and in a minute is galloping toward town.

Paccolett climbs upon the horse-block, and looking at her disappearing form as the fine mare goes tearing over the road, thrusts his hands into his pockets and exclaims, "Jewhilikins!" Then slipping down again, he makes a ring in the dust and begins playing marbles.

* * * * * *

The Golden Lily is beautiful, slowly approaching the town in the yellow light of a setting sun. Two men stand on the forward deck. The slight one is earnestly scanning the avenue which leads from the landing to Court Square. Suddenly he turns to his companion, who has been reading a paper.

"You announced no such purpose," says Eustace

to Magruder, who holds the printed charges in his hand. "Am I correct?"

"Assuredly!" answers Robert, abstractedly. "That statement is as false as the preceding."

"Then what means this paper?" asks Eustace, taking the sheet. Pointing at the eight names, he adds, "They offer a multitude of witnesses."

A singular smile gleams in Magruder's face. "It means," he says, in a constrained tone, "that I am condemned, and these are my executioners!"

Eustace starts, but makes no reply. He gazes at Laura, who sits near the wheel-house looking out over the burnished sun-path in the water. Presently turning to Robert, he lays his hand on his shoulder and says, "Do not return. Your life is worth more than this. Go with us to the great West."

Magruder silently looks at his sister, and an expression of pain crosses his fine countenance.

"Yonder," exclaims Eustace, pointing to the west, where the sun is sinking amidst amber and gold, "is life, happiness, hope. Back there," waving his hand to the dismal swamp, where night is casting shadow after shadow, "is despair and death! Stay with us, Robert."

The young man's form expands in its splendid proportions, and throwing back his lion-like head, he exclaims, in deep, firm accents: "Back there, Eustace, is my home; and there shall I return,

though the trees were bearing dragon's teeth, and the ground bristling with bayonets !"

After a painful moment of thought Eustace lays his hand upon the young man's shoulder, and looking into his face, says, "I shall remain with you and see the end of this affair."

"Useless !" answers Robert, abstractedly gazing at the evening scene. "They may not attack for a month or a year. No one can tell the time or place, and you cannot be with me always."

While he speaks the staging is lowered ; and hastily kissing his sister and pressing Eustace's hand, the young man descends into the cabin and soon appears upon the levee. Here he stops and waves an adieu to Laura and her husband.

Bracken has followed him ashore, and now runs about sorely puzzled. At last the Newfoundland, with a short bark, looking up into Robert's eyes, leaves him, and crossing the stage joins Laura upon the steamer. Rough deck-hands note the scene, and make way for the dog as they whisper together in groups. The signal-bell taps, the wheels churn; and standing on the after-guards, as the boat moves slowly away, Eustace and his bride look over the water at their brother's tall form carved on the background of willows, with darkness falling around him.

* * * * * *

In a room at the court-house the little judge is sitting by a table with an open book before him. He has read an article in the newspaper blaming his action in the release of Magruder, and he is now reading up the authorities to satisfy his mind.

A noise is heard without. The door flies open, and Bessie Cecil enters, her hair falling about her shoulders, her cheeks flushed, and eyes sparkling with excitement.

"Prevent this murder!" cries the girl, earnestly. "You have not a moment to lose."

"Bless me!" says the little man, dropping his book, "what can I do?"

"Do!" cries Bessie, stamping her little foot. "Arrest these men; they will kill Robert Magruder!" and she thrusts the printed slip before the little man's eyes.

He reads the paper, and rising, with a helpless look, ambles up and down the room, rubbing his hands and exclaiming, "Oh! what shall I do? Oh, for a precedent! if I just had a precedent! What shall I do?"

The deep-toned whistle of the steamer floats in the darkening air. Springing toward the little man, Bessie seizes his arm. "Quick! quick!" she cries; "he is on that boat! Hark! I hear the beat of its wheels in the water. Another moment and you are too late!"

"Grasping a book, the little judge turns over the leaves. Then dropping it he takes another, exclaiming all the while, "What shall I do? Oh, if I just could find a precedent!"

"Dolt!" cries the girl; and then she stands listening. The wheels have ceased. "Perhaps it is not yet too late," she says, turning to the judge. "Oh! I entreat you, arrest these men; prevent this crime!"

"My stars! my stars!" whimpers the little fellow, ambling about in renewed distress; "was ever man so beset! Oh, young lady! can you cite me a precedent?"

Bessie is standing near a window, her finger on her lips, gazing intently into the fallen night. A cluster of dark figures approach from the river bearing a limp human form. They cross the green and enter the court-house; and as their steady tread resounds through the hall a death-like pallor settles on the girl's face, and huskily she whispers, "Too late! too late!"

"Ah, ha!" exclaims the little judge, triumphantly, approaching her and gleefully pointing to an open book which he holds. "See here, young lady; I've found the precedent. Now let me copy—"

Heedless of the little man, the girl walks down the hall, where the men who have borne in the

body respectfully uncover and stand as she passes; and taking her palfrey, she returns toward her home. At the gate she is met by Cecil, who offers his arm for her to dismount; but she, with a stony stare, says, "He is dead; you could have saved him!" Without a word, the father turns from his daughter and walks into the house.

* * * * * *

Robert stood viewing the steamer until its graceful proportions were hidden behind the upper bend, and then, turning from the river, walked slowly up the avenue toward the court-house. In front of the residence which contained the ceiled room Bludger was standing with five men of the mystic society. Magruder turned, intending to retrace his steps and avoid an encounter. But the scout called, and the men prepared to shoot. Facing the six, Robert drew his revolver. At this instant, two approaching from behind plunged their daggers into his back. Looking at these men with unutterable scorn, he fell and died without a groan.

CHAPTER XVIII.

"I fear I wrong the honorable men
Whose daggers have stabbed Cæsar."

Julius Cæsar.

LAST summer unexpected business carried me to the mountain-city of Denver. The train reached its destination, I supped at "mine inn," and then consulted the city directory. A familiar name attracted me; and erelong I was approaching a handsome suburban residence. Over the lawn, as I entered the gate, a great Newfoundland dog came bounding. Welcoming the visitor with a joyous bark, he escorted him to the brilliantly lighted edifice.

A handsome, dark-eyed boy stood on a portico, with his arm about the slender waist of a golden-haired maiden; and under the gas-lights the youth's manly bearing contrasted with the girl's willowy grace like another Wiley and Laura.

At a window stood a matronly lady whose deep blue eyes and classic bearing I thought I recognized. A moment after Eustace's aquiline face, somewhat more rounded than when I saw him last, but decidedly handsomer, appeared beside his wife's.

This, then, is the family of Eustace, and this his Western home! What longings has his fair wife, I wondered, for the country where she was reared? I pulled the bell with these reflections, and a moment after stood in the parlor, exchanging greetings with old friends.

Early in the night the comely children retired, followed by the old dog. Observing my glance of inquiry, the father said: "Bracken is devoted to them. Every night he sleeps at their door. But his affection is greater for the boy."

On a portico with Eustace after his charming wife left us, I remarked, as I sipped his old wine: "The Newfoundland is more attached to your son Robert. I do not wonder. Do you not see the resemblance?"

"To his uncle? Yes. This is doubtless the cause of the old dog's love."

Eustace lit a cigar and smoked in silence. We were looking out at the distant mountains, silvered with moonlight on their snowy summits. "In a valley yonder," he said, pointing to the hoary peaks, "is young Tock's grave. He was scalped while scouting for Indians, after the dispersion of Bludger's band."

"What became of those men of the mystic tie?" I asked.

"Fatal is his error," answered Eustace, thought-

fully, "who commits crime supposing it popular. The public sense will invariably revolt. After Robert's death a brand was silently placed on those men. No hand was raised against them, but in every eye they read the verdict, 'Murderer!' The organization fell to pieces. They never met in the ceiled room again. Men involuntarily shunned them; and one after another they became vagabonds on the earth."

"And Bludger?" I asked, with deep interest.

"A curse seemed on the man. His vast energy was palsied, and he wandered about vainly seeking surcease of sorrow. Habits of drink increased, he recklessly squandered his fortune, and at last he was found, one morning, in bed at the hotel, faultlessly dressed, with the dagger that killed Magruder buried in his heart. He died by his own hand to escape the horror of life."

Awhile I sat listening to the chiming of a distant bell, and thinking of this terrible thing, retribution; then, remembering the news-boys at the train on a recent visit to the South, I said, "The *Big Black Agriculturist*—this isn't Frogg?"

"Yes," replied Eustace, with a smile, pouring me a glass of sherry wine. "After Bludger's power ceased, the editor became quite a respectable person. Percy Cecil's influence became apparent. The change of name, and the black man at the

head of the paper, attracted the negroes, who are learning to read, and its circulation increased. Frogg became a useful man, and is now, by the way, advocating the railroads and factories which are building in the Delta."

"Has Doc recovered his senses?" I asked after another pause, taking my hat preparatory to bidding good-night.

Eustace arose and, standing on the gallery, replied: "Doctor Cole is yet in the asylum. Usually he is amiable and quite entertaining. But at night, when the sky is clouded and the wind is high, he may be seen by the lightning-flashes through his grated window invoking the mysterious Voodoo power whose chariot-wheels make thunder and whose breathing is the storm."

I walked through deserted streets and communed with memories in darkness. Wild Rock is dead. The Magruders sleep in the valley. Eustace is no longer there. Race conflict remains! Cecil —will he act? The nation may heed his effort: how will he untangle the knot? Has he virtue to sever it with the sword of political separation? Pondering these questions, I lay upon my couch, and slept without an answering dream.

THE END.

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